

# SUPERVISION IN TODAY'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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**To Henry Tetz, Good friend and kind mentor**

# Preface

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It is no secret that elementary schools vary enormously in instructional quality. Almost everyone knows that there are "good" schools and "bad" schools. Reasons for variability in quality are not hard to come by. Socioeconomic factors, inability of some districts to tax adequately, and public apathy all play their part in the erosion of school programs.

It is the point of view of this book, however, that many of these conditions can be ameliorated, if not arrested, by conscious efforts to effect instructional improvement. Instruction is the business of the school, and no school, no matter how good, has arrived at the point where instructional improvement is not a clear mandate.

How instructional improvement can be facilitated is the theme of this book. I have attempted to focus attention upon the problems that supervisory and teaching personnel face as they go about the important work of creating better schools.

This attention to problem areas of supervision has resulted in a consideration of unavoidable supervisory tasks that have been around for a long time. However, these time-tested supervisory tasks are viewed within the context of the modern elementary school. Therefore such indispensable supervisory activities as staff meetings, teacher conferences, and in-service education are presented here with a view to increasing their effectiveness.

In addition to treating the methodology of supervision, I have included material which, hopefully, will indicate some new and/or different dimensions of supervision. The material on supervisory behavior, the point of view expressed with respect to evaluation and school organization are illustrative.

From time to time my own point of view emerges with respect to some of the problems discussed. I can only hope that these comments will be received in the same spirit in which they are offered. If my criticism of certain school practices appears to be sharp, it is only because I feel them to be obstacles to progress. Therefore, while the reader may register disagreement, he should know that my motives are identical with his. We both share an overriding concern for quality instruction.

I would be remiss indeed if I did not express my appreciation to the many people who offered help and encouragement in the preparation of this book. Among these, special thanks go to Dr. Bruce Balow, Dr. Guy L. Bond, Dean Walter Cook, Dean Marcia Edwards, Mr. Wayne Kirk, and Dr. Clifford Hooker, all of the University of Minnesota; Dr. Ronald Lambert, University of Hawaii; to Miss Lillie Harrison who so painstakingly helped with the preparation of the manuscript; and to Mary Anne Curtin who chained me to my desk.

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# SUPERVISION IN TODAY'S ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

# The Context of Supervision

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## The New Meaning of Supervision

Supervision is an old concept with new meanings. These new meanings and how they are understood influence the quality of instruction in today's elementary schools, for in its broadest sense supervision means the improvement of instruction. Although this definition is commonly accepted today, it is not new. Improvement of school programs has always been the ultimate goal of supervision, for there has always been concern for good instruction. Indeed, when the rise of the graded schools necessitated freeing principal-teachers from teaching, more intense supervision clearly was

expected of them. However, because of the limited backgrounds of these early principals, much of the real supervision was exerted by "specialists" who worked out of the superintendent's office.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the supervisor's role in the early period of American education was that of improving instruction just as it is now.

Despite the fact that the broad purpose of supervision has remained unchanged, certain dramatic developments have taken place in the field of elementary education with the result that improvement programs today bear only a remote resemblance to those of earlier days.

## CHANGES AFFECTING SUPERVISION

### *Increased Training of Teacher Personnel*

Perhaps the most obvious of the changes which have affected supervision have occurred in the realm of teacher education. When teachers were graduates of high school normal programs or brief post high school programs, not much was expected of them with regard to program improvement. Usually supervisory help was administered to them by those who had a broader grasp of instruction than they.

Teacher preparation programs have altered considerably in recent years. Certification standards have been upgraded across the nation, and college graduation is rapidly becoming the rule. In school districts of outstanding quality, a master's degree is commonly required. Certainly these higher standards of preparation have had a leavening effect on elementary education and have been responsible in large part for the new look in supervision. No longer can supervisors assume that elementary school teachers are ignorant of the most basic

<sup>1</sup> Henry J. Otto, *Organization and Administration of Elementary Schools*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York, 1954, p. 653.

pedagogical facts as once they might have been. Only a supervisor with considerable courage, laced with a strong dash of stupidity, would assume today that he knows more about teaching than his whole staff combined. Yet such assumptions were once common.

By operating from a new set of premises, today's supervisor can take for granted a large store of knowledge in today's teacher, a store of knowledge which would have been dazzling only a few decades ago. This increased knowledge is enormously helpful in executing programs of improvement and, of course, has mandated a new approach to supervision.

### *Increased Professionalization of Teaching Personnel*

The increased professionalization of teaching is another factor which partially explains the new approach to supervision. While a higher level of professional awareness may result from increased amounts of training, it is not an inevitable result. The professional teacher has certain attitudes that are lacking in a teacher who is non-professional. These attitudes are clearly reflected in the day-to-day work of the teacher, both in the classroom and out of it. Foremost among these attitudes is that of self-improvement and improvement of the profession. These two characteristics are hallmarks of the professional, and, as they come to the fore in elementary education, their impact is increasingly felt in the area of program improvement.

Perhaps the most notable result of increased professionalization has been a change in the relationship between teachers and supervisory personnel. Even if they wished, today's supervisors cannot be or act omniscient; teachers will not tolerate such an attitude. Indeed, it is doubtful that they ever tolerated a person who assumed he knew everything with any other attitude except resignation. In today's teacher a supervisor meets a person who reads, attends conferences and meetings, and who perhaps works on state and national com-

mittees; in short, a person who in his own field is as professional as the supervisor himself.

Of course there are notable exceptions. There are teachers who are singularly non-professional. These are people who lack a commitment to teaching with all that this implies. Nevertheless, the number of teachers who might be considered merely as job holders is diminishing. The trend is unmistakable, and it is clearly in the direction of the professional teacher. The respect that supervisors hold for this trend in large part determines the nature of supervision that is carried on.

### *Increased Competence of Supervisory Personnel*

Another change in education that affects supervision is more directly related to supervisors. As teachers have become better trained and more professional, so too have supervisors. For the most part certification standards have tended to hold supervisory personnel at higher levels of preparation. It is common for supervisors to hold the master's degree, and sixth year programs are becoming more prevalent. Indeed some hold doctor's degrees.

For the supervisor, as for the teacher, additional training has tended to lead to the higher development of professional sensitivities. Here again, these sensitivities may be discerned in attitudes which are reflected on the job. Here the commitment is to improve instruction and the means through which it may be effected. The implications of increased training and professionalization of supervisory personnel will be treated in detail in succeeding sections of this volume.

### *Increased Knowledge about the Learning Process*

Another change is concerned with learning. While there is a great deal to be learned about the learning process, much research of a helpful nature has been produced. Perhaps the most dramatic effect upon supervision has been the discredit-

ing of the mental discipline theory of learning. While there are still teachers who teach as though practice and perseverance are the keys to good instruction, their number is diminishing steadily, and in their places are instructors who reject rigid and narrow approaches to learning. The research on individual differences by Thorndike, Cook, and others provides irrefutable evidence that instruction must be varied to individuals in a class or to groups possessing similar characteristics within a class.

The effect on supervision of the studies on learning, interests, individual differences, and trait differences has been enormous. Indeed it is not an exaggeration to state that the implications of these studies have been more instrumental than any factor in elementary education in giving supervision its new look. The whole supervisory process has been revised in terms of what studies of the learning process have revealed, even to the almost routine supervisory duty of planning for a classroom visit. Formalism based on the old Herbartian steps has given way to a more versatile approach to teaching. Indeed there could be no other result. If the mind is not like a muscle, simply amenable to exercise, and if children vary markedly in their capacities for learning, industry, susceptibility to motivation, experiences, and intelligence, supervisors and teachers are driven to change from instructional programs that merely tolerate these conditions to programs which capitalize on them.

Since James's experiments on transfer of training, educational fads have come and gone. There have been various plans proposed and practiced. None of these has ever been a satisfactory substitute for a good teacher with a reasonably sized class supported by a wide range of instructional equipment and expert supervisory help. All else is compromise.

### *Increased Public Interest in Education*

Another important change that has had an impact on instruction is society's changing view of education. There has



always been a traditional respect for education in the United States. Public education, however, rarely has had the degree of support that might be indicated by this respect. The general inadequacy of the tax base and the inequalities within and among the states are too well known to warrant more than a sad commentary.

Coupled with this was a kind of public ennui about education. While there have always been zealous and astonishingly active members of PTA organizations, they have been outnumbered in rather large proportions by those without zeal. Many schools have prepared informational programs especially for parents only to have pathetically small numbers attend. While attendance at school sponsored meetings is not a perfect measure of public interest, it is an indication. And present indications point to a new interest in education. Not only are PTAs holding regular meetings set around educational problems, but other groups as well have been formed. Some of these new organizations may be less than enthusiastic about the types of instruction in today's schools, but the important point is that they exist. This in itself is a healthy sign.

Another indication of aroused interest in the work of the school is the number of books about public education published in recent years. Unfortunately, some of these books lack a certain balance which is more than compensated for by an overabundance of conviction. Others are so balanced that they really say very little. Still others do a creditable job of projecting a clear image of American education. Again, the important point is that these books exist, and, if some of them are critical, so much the better.

While the number of books with educational themes has increased enormously in recent years, this number is overshadowed by the number of articles in lay journals during the same period. Again, unfortunately many of these treatises have tended to be highly colored and emotionally charged. Indeed, some of these periodicals have published "debates" on the quality of education. Added to these fires are the letters

to the editor printed in every major newspaper across the nation.

All of these excursions and alarums were unheard of only a few years ago. Some educators have become uncomfortable and defensive in face of criticism or smug and complacent in the light of favorable comment. These people have missed and are missing one of the most notable events in public education—a national arousal and interest in their profession.

The new challenges created by increased public interest in education must be answered by solid accomplishment on the part of the schools. Those few school people who would attempt to present a favorable aspect through their public relations rather than achievement lean heavily on a hollow reed. It is a professional responsibility to create and maintain the best possible programs, and the ways in which this responsibility are borne furnish the best basis for the interpretation of the school's work.

From all the controversy about education today, one point is clear; society realizes as perhaps never before the crucial importance of its children's education. This realization has enormous implications for those charged with supervision. Indifferent school programs no longer result in public indifference, but rather in public hostility. This change in the public's attitude is also being felt in today's supervision.

## DEFINITION OF SUPERVISION IN TERMS OF PURPOSES

Until this point some changes that have contributed to the new look in supervision have been identified. It cannot be said that the ultimate purpose of supervision has been altered materially as a result of these changes. But it must be said that the means of achieving the goal of improved instruction have been altered drastically chiefly because points of view about working with people have had to undergo changes.

Some writers, for purposes of discussion, prefer to categorize supervision under any one of three headings: autocratic, laissez-faire, and democratic. While such a classification may be convenient, it is far from accurate. No one of these descriptive titles defines today's supervision, for elements of all three are probably present in the supervisory process. When writers berate autocratic and laissez-faire supervision and sing the delights of democratic supervision, they sometimes lose sight of the mark, and democratic supervision becomes an end in itself. It is this concept that undoubtedly gives rise to the rather dangerously and certainly misleading comment that "what you do is less important than how you do it." Supervision of the right sort is less a matter of technique and more a matter of attitude. It is more than "the ability to get along with people."<sup>2</sup> It is the ability to make significant improvements in instruction through others. Of course, this means that human relationships assume a high priority, but they are not ends in themselves.

Better than the description of supervision in terms of convenient classifications is the definition in terms of purposes. Let it be said as forthrightly as possible that supervision is concerned with instruction. Everything else is subordinate. Thus it would appear that the purposes of supervision subsumed under its ultimate goal are as follows:

1. To set a proper classroom environment for learning.
2. To develop and utilize methods and materials which will insure the steady progress of each child.
3. To work with appropriate personnel to formulate instructional goals for the school or school system that are realistic and achievable.
4. To provide the school or school system with a clearly defined

<sup>2</sup>The 1943 *Yearbook of Department of Elementary School Principals* reports the results of a survey from 689 school systems about selection standards for elementary school principals, perhaps the most important single group of supervisors in the nation. Ability to get along with people ranked first; ability to supervise and help teachers grow ranked almost at the bottom.

supervisory program that will insure the attainment of instructional goals.

5. To develop evaluative procedures that will appraise the effectiveness of the program.
6. To develop the attitude in the entire professional staff that supervision must be cooperative and that no teacher fulfills his professional obligation unless he works in concert with others to improve instruction.
7. To develop the attitude that instructional improvement is directly related to self-improvement of all members of the professional staff.
8. To provide specific helps to teachers with day-to-day problems.
9. To develop a sound working relationship in which teachers feel secure and confident.

## PROBLEMS OF MODERN SUPERVISION

### *Problems of Staff*

If the purposes of supervision are to be achieved, certain conditions must be met. Of importance among these conditions is the nature of the staff. The quality of supervision is dependent on the quality of the teachers in the system. Because supervision must be a cooperative enterprise, shared by administrators, supervisors, and teachers, the quality of the teaching staff becomes a paramount consideration. Teachers tend to vary with respect to such important matters as experience, professionalism, energy, intelligence and, indeed, with respect to every trait assumed to be important in the act of teaching. Because of this variance in traits, one can expect variability in the quality of improvement programs from school system to school system. Some systems, because of limited financial resources, cannot afford to recruit and keep truly gifted teachers. Some schools, because of an accident of timing, may have a preponderance of inexperienced people. This means that every supervisor cannot expect to launch brave and bold improvement programs because he may not

have staff members who can assume the necessary burdens with insight and vigor.

If the problem of staff inadequacy is due primarily to inexperience, time coupled with solid experience will help immensely. However, there is a staff problem that is far more stubborn. If a supervisor must work with cynical, non-professional job holders, he is whipped before he starts. There are those who would say that if the supervisor is skilled in human relations and if he has the "ability to get along with people," the problem of a cynical, non-professional staff will not persist. Indeed people who make such statements would regard a poor supervisory program in this type of setting as evidence of the supervisor's inadequacy; it is not true. No supervisor can succeed in the improvement of instruction where the teaching staff is indifferent. Where cooperation is not given, where self-improvement is disdained, where there is antagonism to supervision, nothing better than mediocre instruction is apt to result.

Again the cure for this problem is time, patience, and skillful selection to fill vacancies as they occur. Perhaps the truest test of a supervisor's skill in this adverse setting is his ability to keep professionalism flourishing in those few who have it and not let it be deadened by those teachers who are suspicious of any programs which may depart from page assignments to single textbooks.

It should be pointed out that some cynicism may stem from genuinely poor working conditions and indefensible personnel policies. Here the supervisory mandate is clear. Unfavorable conditions of work and rigid, restrictive policies must be changed before attitudinal changes can emerge. Effecting these changes therefore becomes a matter of first priority, and, through these changes, some potentially fine teachers can be brought back into the mainstream of professionalism.

In any event, the degree of training and professionalism of teachers are factors in supervision. Where they are present,

exciting things can happen. Where they are lacking, only frustration and monotony will result.

### *Problems of Time*

Another condition that often interferes with modern supervision is the problem of time. It is futile to attempt improvement programs when sufficient time is not available. One of the more important purposes of supervision is the development of a cooperative approach toward programs of improvement. Unfortunately, school programs are ordinarily arranged in such a fashion as to make such a cooperative approach impossible. Teachers who must be involved in supervision often find supervisory activities scheduled at the worst possible time, usually after school. In fairness to supervisors and principals who schedule these activities, it must be said that they have little choice. With the concept of the self-contained classroom strongly in vogue, there are typically few opportunities for meetings, conferences, visits, committees, guest speakers, and workshops. It is obvious that such activities must be held either before school, during noon hours, or after school. Needless to say, activities scheduled for these periods must be abbreviated.

Those responsible for developing supervisory programs have, as yet, left untapped the most obvious time that will permit extended and uninterrupted segments of time to work on improvement programs. This is the summer "vacation." Most schools have what is commonly known as the preschool workshops which occur in late summer. These workshops are gestures in the right direction, but, as matters stand now, they are only gestures. Two or three days are commonly set aside for such activities. A week is regarded as uncommonly long. It is strange that more use is not made of the summer vacation for improvement programs. It is not so strange to note that those school systems that utilize the summer hiatus for improvement programs are among the best in the nation.

Another adjustment that might be made to alleviate the problem of time is a reorganization of the self-contained classroom school. The value of extended pupil-teacher association must be weighed against other values. Certainly this is not an argument for complete departmentalization of elementary schools or a return to the platoon school. It would appear that the values of the self-contained classroom can be preserved by adding specialists to the school staff to teach music, art, physical education, and foreign language. The whole question of the internal organization of the elementary school and its relationship to supervision will be treated at length in a later section. Perhaps it is enough to point out here that a school staff hired for 185 days per year and teaching in a self-contained classroom will never be able to participate in improvement programs without being shamefully overworked.

### *Problem of Community Misunderstanding*

If the problem of finding time for adequate programs of supervision is vexing, the problem of community misunderstanding of the aims of modern supervision is even more so. At best, a lack of understanding on the part of the community will result in apathy and at worst in actual hostility. In no case will it encourage the active support that is so badly needed if excellent school programs are to flourish.

Perhaps the most dangerous outcome is an organized community resistance to change. If supervision means improvement, change is inevitable. And where change is resisted, improvement is resisted. Where this occurs, several important developments are likely to ensue. The most damaging effect is felt by the most active and professional staff members of the system. Certainly there is little more disheartening to a professional staff than to be told that certain improvements cannot be made because of "community pressure." What will happen in this kind of situation is clearly predictable. The

better staff members leave for positions where their efforts will be more clearly recognized. For those who choose to remain, a certain deterioration in attitudes, drive, and interest is likely to ensue.

In any event, morale suffers. In the minds of many staff members, lines are drawn and the community becomes a sort of amorphous, generalized villain whose every move is suspect. This in turn generates further community resistance and the unhappy chain of events is lengthened until an unfortunate crisis develops.

The deplorable fact is that throughout these situations both the school and community have common aims epitomized in a common wish for an excellent educational program. Certainly even in the most regressive community no one takes a stand in favor of bad education. The divergence of views is traceable to differences as to how excellent education is to be achieved, or at worst, how poor education is to be avoided.

Certainly it is crucial for school people to be sensitive to community attitudes and to draw from these perceptions programs of interpretation that will tend to preclude the development of massive negativism. Supervisors, administrators, and teachers alike must remember that the initial response to novelty in something as important as education creates suspicion unless it is accompanied by clearcut and cogent rationales. While much can be done to ameliorate community misunderstanding, it is best to keep communities abreast of developments as they occur so that costly and time-consuming remediation can be avoided.

An important aspect of supervisory activity, therefore, is the task of keeping the various "publics" informed as changes in instruction occur. Information, however, without interpretation is not enough. Why are changes being effected? What was wrong with the "old way"? Is the contemplated change really an improvement? What are the specifics of the change? How will the new program be better than the old one? These



mandatory the development of new approaches to supervision. The changes are:

1. Increased training of teacher and supervisory personnel.
2. Increased professionalization of teacher and supervisory personnel.
3. New knowledge from research in the field of learning.
4. Increased interest in education on the part of society.

Supervision today is defined in terms of purposes rather than descriptive labels. There are certain conditions operating that tend to obstruct the fulfillment of these purposes. Briefly these are:

1. The problem of staff inadequacy.
2. The problem of available time.
3. The problem of community resistance.
4. Problems of a local nature that must be assessed and met within the local setting.

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## CHAPTER 2

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# The Relationship of Supervisory Behavior to Instructional Improvement

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPERVISORY BEHAVIOR

In the best supervisory programs, all members of the professional staff participate. This is often taken to mean that all members participate equally at all times in programs of improvements. Even if this were desirable, it would be impossible. Good programs of supervision are organized and, as with any organization worth talking about, someone is in a

position of leadership. Obviously, in a supervisory program, it is the supervisor who must assume this position, even though he might be called principal, coordinator, consultant, or any one of a dozen other titles that are sometimes more decorative than descriptive.

*The person in this position has status whether he likes it or not. Because he has status as a leader, he is on exhibit. Because he is a leader, he must do something; because he must do something, he is liable to error. If he errs frequently, he is incompetent. If he errs infrequently, he is "good." However, there is an imponderable operating through all the decision-making processes that the supervisor works through, and this imponderable might be termed supervisory behavior.*

It is common to observe that some persons in positions of leadership can do nothing without creating all varieties of discontent and murmurings. Even when what is done is obviously the right thing to do, the murmurings persist. On the other hand, there are leaders who are forgiven almost any mistake or error of judgment within defined limits of competency. Superintendents know, for example, that some supervisors can "get their teachers to go along" with a decision while others in the same system cannot.

The difference is to be found in how these people behave within their roles as instructional leaders; or, in this special context, how they behave as they go about the important task of improving instruction. One thing is certain; because supervisors are in leadership positions, teachers react to them. And in large part these reactions are reactions to the supervisor's behavior as well as his decisions.

Because of the importance of supervisory behavior, a great deal has been written about human relationships, group processes, and democratic procedures. Although these are important considerations, they must be kept subordinate to the objectives of supervision. For example, a supervisory program that is marked by a great deal of attention to these matters may be found in situations where routine matters function

smoothly and easily, but wherein little or no instructional improvement is taking place. Indeed, one might find it easy to defend the proposition that human relations are fostered best where there is a great deal of enthusiasm for the status quo. Here no one is threatened. Here all the trappings of group processes and democratic supervision can flourish in an atmosphere free from any taint of real enterprise. Let there be no mistake, however, about the importance of proper human relations. Without them, a real supervisory program is impossible. With them, a real supervisory program is possible, but not inevitable.

Group processes, human relationships, and a democratic approach to supervision are only means to improving instruction, but, because they are important means, it is appropriate to deal with them in some detail as supervisory behavior.

### *Supervisory Behavior and Morale*

Morale is difficult to describe. One finds it in the most unlikely places: in schools in depressed areas; in ill-equipped classrooms; and, indeed, even among poorly paid teachers. It would be an exaggeration to say that healthy, robust poverty is a prime condition for morale, but good morale does occur in situations of educational deprivation. It is equally true that in situations where conditions are more comfortable, morale's leavening effect can be lacking.

It would be an oversimplification to say that morale is a result of a single effect, in this case a result of supervisory behavior. However, it would be equally misleading to omit supervisory behavior from any consideration of morale. Teachers exhibit a great deal of variability with regard to their attitudes toward their jobs. And it follows that where attitudes are poor, morale tends to be low. The converse is, of course, true. Certainly supervisory behavior has an effect on this general pattern.

Flanders,<sup>3</sup> in dealing with this problem from a slightly different point of view, states categorically that: "*the greatest single influence on the school climate is the principal, no matter what he does.*" Since Flanders deals with the principal as a supervisor of instruction, it is legitimate to regard any supervisor in the same light with respect to supervisory behavior. He sets up principles, based on the premise that any instructional improvement is the result of changes in classroom behavior on the part of teachers.

The first of these principles states that: "*Shifts in a teacher's classroom behavior involve shifts in his self-concept, are usually tension-producing and are very personal. Furthermore the overall process is unique to each individual.*"<sup>4</sup>

This principle has enormous implications for the supervisor. If the process of effecting change in classroom performance produces tension and if it is unique to each teacher, supervision by edict or memoranda is immediately precluded. It would follow that the supervisor must assess the effect of change, not on the "staff" but rather on each individual of the staff. It might also follow that some aspects of improvement must be initiated in some classrooms with success before they can be tried in the classrooms of teachers more suspicious of change. It also follows that effective countermeasures to tension and the insecurity it breeds would lie in the kind of relationships established by the supervisor. The extent to which teachers lack confidence in the supervisor is the extent to which they will be resistant to effecting changes in their teaching.

A second principle states that: "*Behavior changes are more likely to occur as a result of clarifying the feelings and emotions that are associated with the change and the consequences of change, rather than as a result of emphasizing only the*

<sup>3</sup> Ned A. Flanders, "The Administrator and Instruction," *The Elementary School Journal*, October, 1956, pp. 28-35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

*intellectual aspects of the problem.*"<sup>5</sup> Problems related to lack of attention to this principle clearly lie in the area of supervisory behavior. It is a relatively easy matter to discuss the rationale underlying certain instructional changes. To do this without considering the long-entrenched feelings of individual teachers is to flirt with failure. When teachers approach an instructional problem in a certain way, they do so for their own reasons. These reasons may stem from tradition ("this is the way I was taught to do it") or from their own convictions ("I've tried other ways, and my way works"). Whatever the reasons, there are usually values associated with them. There is often an implicit feeling of criticism involved with a suggestion for change, and this has a threatening effect upon many teachers. A sensible supervisor will not ignore their feelings, and he will lend powerful support to separate failure of a method from failure of a teacher. While it is difficult at best to clarify feelings and emotions, one way that suggests itself is to encourage teachers to discuss freely any proposed changes, particularly what they feel to be the negative aspects of these changes. Any extreme negativism will probably be moderated by viewpoints of others. In addition, the cathartic effect of such discussions is not to be discounted.

Another of Flanders' principles relevant to this discussion of morale is: *"To be stable, changes in classroom behavior must be rewarding and self-motivated. They require time and cannot take place in social isolation."*<sup>6</sup> The implications of this principle for supervisors is clear. Any activity, if not rewarded, does not persist. The matter of rewards is a slippery thing at best, for people, even normal people, get their rewards in strange ways indeed. However, it is safe to say that if changes are made in an instructional program, and if teachers are rewarded in terms of satisfaction with the results, much has been accomplished—much, but not enough. It is here that a supervisor can, through his behavior, do a great

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

deal to enhance morale. The effect of praise upon performance is well known. Certainly no one suffers a lapse of morale as a result of sincere compliments. This is obvious. What is not so obvious, however, is the course of action to be pursued when changes result in no improvement or, at times, a poorer program than before.

Spears<sup>7</sup> speaks of an attitude of futility that many teachers hold toward supervision. Perhaps one reason for this attitude is due to the fact that supervisors have made too much of a projected change, only to have it wilt under the stern conditions of practice. Surely, not many rewards result from failure. However, if supervisory behavior is proper, it then holds and communicates a highly experimental attitude toward change. Viewed in this light, successful change is not inevitable, and, when success does not result, it furnishes the basis for a search for alternatives, for other avenues of success. It is common knowledge that progress may be based on learnings made from errors. While one would hope that errors would be few, they should, when they occur, result in a more interested, more aggressive search for causes. The result of error, therefore, should not be disillusionment, but rather a higher degree of morale. In this fashioning of morale, the supervisor has an important role to play.

### *Other Factors Affect Morale*

Not only is the attitude of supervisory personnel important to morale; certain extrinsic factors also exert an influence. Important among these are salary and conditions under which teachers work. There is a danger that these matters may be exaggerated, however. Some studies indicate that salary and work factors are of secondary importance with regard to job satisfaction. What these studies emphasize is that a great many

<sup>7</sup> Harold Spears, *Improving the Supervision of Instruction*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1953.

people will work in situations at comparatively low salaries if they feel that they are important to the success of their enterprise and if they feel that they are treated with respect and fairness.

Hines's<sup>8</sup> investigation tends to bear this out. He studied the faculty of a Florida elementary school with a history of low faculty turnover. Using the interview as the method for collecting his data, Hines concluded that the following conditions were important to faculty stability:

1. A job so organized that it leaves time for recreation and a personal life.
2. A real enjoyment in working with children.
3. A cooperative group of children.
4. Freedom to teach according to one's best professional judgment.
5. A minimum of interruptions and clerical duties.
6. Being a member of a well-trained, competent professional faculty.
7. Identification, membership, and participation in professional organizations.
8. Adequate facilities and materials, chosen with the help of the teachers.
9. A competent, cooperative principal.
10. Frequent contact with parents and the consequences of these contacts plus.
11. A feeling of being as free from pressures in one's personal life as other professional people.
12. A substantial stake in the retirement system.<sup>9</sup>

When asked about the matter of salary, the overwhelming majority of those interviewed said they would not be tempted to change positions at even double their present salaries.<sup>10</sup> This is an impressive indication of the influence of supervisory behavior on morale, for almost every one of the items mentioned by members of this sample is a direct result of

<sup>8</sup> Vynce A. Hines, "Why Do Teachers Keep Teaching?", *National Elementary Principal*, February, 1958, pp. 37-40.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-40.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.



mentioned administrative relationships and an additional 20 per cent mentioned school board relationships.<sup>16</sup>

A study by Hill<sup>17</sup> indicates that the most important professional reasons given by teachers in his sample for leaving teaching were less favorable working conditions than in other professions, lack of helpful supervision, discipline problems, and pupil and parental attitude toward scholarship.

Another factor with respect to the development and maintenance of morale and its relationship to persistence in teaching is pointed up by Rabinowitz and Williams.<sup>18</sup> They found that many new teachers were assigned to the most difficult schools of New York City. They also noted that the turnover in these schools was greater than in schools with a lower "difficulty index." In addition, when subjects teaching in these more difficult schools were asked about their intentions to continue in the teaching profession, more were "undecided" than those in less difficult schools.<sup>19</sup> Certainly problems in morale are created when new teachers are placed in difficult schools. Yet: "It is probably true that wherever teachers are employed, those who are just beginning their careers are given the most difficult assignments. The more desirable positions tend to be preempted by the teachers with the greatest seniority. No matter how common the practice may be, the assignment of relatively inexperienced teachers to schools presenting especially difficult teaching positions is not easily defended."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> More than one reason was given by individuals in the sample, which accounts for the total percentage in excess of 100.

<sup>17</sup> Wayne W. Hill, "Factors Contributing to the Problem of Teachers in the Secondary Schools of Maryland Leaving the Profession from 1950-1955," unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1956.

<sup>18</sup> William Rabinowitz and Ida Williams, "Initial Report on the Teaching Careers of the 1953-1954 Class of Student Teachers of Municipal Colleges of the City of New York," Research Series 35, Division of Teacher Education, Board of Higher Education of the City of New York, January, 1958, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

### *Supervisory Behavior and the Individual Teacher*

Perhaps the most significant way to view supervisory behavior is through the eyes of the teacher. Unfortunately, little work has been done to determine the specific reactions of teachers to various types of supervisory behaviors. One interesting study carried out by Benjamin<sup>21</sup> deserves mention. Using the "critical incident" technique, Benjamin identified four hundred specific incidents which he classified under appropriate headings. These incidents were reported by 100 principals and 100 teachers and were considered "critical" when one type of behavior was reported in both its positive and negative aspects by the same respondent group.

1. *Participates in the classroom activities as a helper to the teacher and does not interrupt.* The negative aspect of this behavior is to take over the class without warning and either scold the children or introduce some topic far different from that which the teacher had prepared for that period.
2. *Teaches occasionally to relieve teachers for other duties, respecting plans made by the teacher.*
3. *Builds teacher's confidence by demonstrating knowledge of teaching procedures.* This particular behavior related particularly to primary grades' methods and materials. The unsuccessful supervisor admits that he knows nothing about primary methods and procedures.
4. *Observes class and follows up with a clear direct evaluation of the teacher's work.* The negative aspect of this behavior is to observe a class and never arrange for any type of conference.
5. *Uses formal evaluation conference as objective agreement concerning strengths and weaknesses previously discussed.* The negative aspect of this behavior occurs when the supervisor fails to make any comment to a teacher one way or another about his efficiency and then makes sudden adverse criticisms during the evaluation conference.
6. *Supports teacher in his relations with children and parents.* The unsuccessful supervisor is one who either fails to support the teacher or requires him to change his original decision.
7. *Relieves teacher of clerical details to allow more time for prep-*

<sup>21</sup> Dayton Benjamin, "How Elementary Principals Can Improve Instruction," *School Board Journal*, May, 1956, pp. 37-39.

aration and teaching. Obviously, the ineffective behavior is to require more clerical and bookkeeping work from teachers rather than seeking ways to reduce these tasks.

8. *Grants teachers' requests for help from outside consultants.*
- The negative aspect of this behavior is, of course, its converse, the denial of such help.<sup>22</sup>

Both teachers and principals agreed that the following list in descending order of frequency of behaviors was effective in terms of supervision:

1. Follows through with teacher in the development of new techniques and procedures.
2. Helps teacher improve classroom control by giving suggestions that apply directly to the problem area.
3. Provides direct assistance in utilization of instructional materials.
4. Considers teachers' preferences and ideas when making suggestions.
5. Makes certain that teacher has knowledge of background of situation before making suggestions.
6. Demonstrates teaching procedures in such a way that children's respect for the teacher is preserved.
7. Brings instructional materials to the classroom and shows teacher how to use them with particular youngsters.
8. Gives direct praise for specific accomplishments.
9. Gives reassurance that teacher is generally doing a good job.
10. Arranges for teacher to sit in on a conference to discuss the problems of a particular child.
11. Gives teacher an assignment in which he feels important before other school and community adults.
12. Complies with teacher's request for expediting additional plant facilities and instructional supplies.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps it should be reemphasized that these behaviors are real in the sense that both the effective behaviors and their converse were reported from on-the-job experience, both by teachers and those charged with supervision. If any generalization at all can be drawn from this study it is perhaps that supervisory behavior is *not* a collection of do's and don'ts,

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

but rather a set of attitudes that one holds toward others. All through the effective behaviors listed above runs the theme of help and support with the involvement of the teacher wherever possible.

### *Supervisory Behavior and Decision-Making*

The success of a supervisory program is dependent on the quality of decisions that influence its direction. Not only are the decisions themselves crucial to the success of the program, but also the means by which they are reached. Indeed, so much importance is attached to how decisions are made that there is a real risk that the decisions themselves may be subordinated to the process. Despite slogans to the contrary, *what* is decided will have as much influence upon supervision as how the decision is reached. Each will exert some influence.

It is with respect to decision-making that proponents of democratic supervision have given way to their most ambitious generalizations. One is often given the impression that important decisions must be characterized by complete staff involvement. In other words, democracy in supervision, according to this view, means that everyone should have a hand in everything. Such a concept, even if possible, would be absurd. First, it is not an accurate view of the democratic process, and, second, it puts certain staff members in the uncomfortable position of passing on matters beyond their competence.

If one were to draw a continuum polarizing complete autocratic decision-making (all decisions made by the supervisor) and complete democratic decision-making (all decisions made by the staff), it would be impossible to locate a single point that would mark the best practice, even in the same school district or school building. Much depends on the problem to be decided, its background, and the speed with which it must be handled, among other things. The human factor must also be considered heavily. For example, a new

teacher experiencing day-to-day difficulties with instruction needs help that is delivered expeditiously without reference to how democratically or autocratically this help is given.

Because it is difficult to generalize about the process of decision-making, perhaps all that can be said is that staff involvement should occur only when it can contribute to a sound decision. If this practice were to be followed faithfully, worries about autocratic versus democratic decision-making might be laid to a final and much overdue rest. There would undoubtedly be far more "democracy" and far less of the artificial trappings of democratic supervision that teachers find objectionable.<sup>24</sup>

Tannenbaum and Schmidt<sup>25</sup> discuss this problem in a different, although appropriate, context. In dealing with leadership and decision-making, they identify three factors of importance. These are:

1. Forces in the manager (supervisor).
2. Forces in the subordinates (teachers).
3. Forces in the situation.

Brushing aside objections that some may have to the terminology used, these three factors have relevance to the decision-making role of the supervisor.

With regard to forces in the supervisor (manager), Tannenbaum and Schmidt mention:

1. His value system.
2. His confidence in subordinates.
3. His own leadership inclinations.
4. His feelings of security in an uncertain situation.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> In a survey of in-service teachers conducted by the author, the most frequently voiced objection to democratic supervision was that of approving issues that had already been decided. One might argue that this is not true democratic supervision, but it is an example of what happens when supervisors feel that they should be democratic even when it is not appropriate.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Tannenbaum and Warren H. Schmidt, "How to Choose a Leadership Pattern," *Harvard Business Review*, March-April, 1958, pp. 95-101.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

The *supervisor's value system* is reflected in how strongly he feels that individuals should have a voice in decisions which affect them, or how strongly he holds the idea that he has been hired to carry the responsibility of decision-making. In addition, his behavior will be conditioned by the organizational pattern of the school and by his concern for personal growth of staff members.

*The confidence that a supervisor places in his teachers* is reflected when the supervisor appraises the knowledge and confidence of staff members in terms of the problem to be solved. After such appraisal a supervisor, rightly or wrongly, may decide that the solution lies beyond the knowledge and competence of the staff.

*The supervisor's own leadership inclinations* exert a telling influence on his behavior. There are those who are comfortable and confident only when they can be directive. Others retain their poise and confidence when it is possible to exert leadership by sharing many leadership functions with the professional staff.

*A supervisor's feelings of security in uncertain situations* is a behavioral influence. The supervisor who releases or diminishes his control over decisions reduces predictability of the outcome. Some supervisors may find it difficult to work confidently under these circumstances while others may find this approach to supervision zestful and challenging.

In addition to these forces acting upon the supervisor, there are equally compelling forces acting upon teachers. Certainly awareness of these factors will influence supervisory behavior to a marked degree. Tannenbaum and Schmidt<sup>27</sup> suggest that supervisory behavior can be free and somewhat easygoing if teachers on a given staff have:

1. Relatively high needs for independence.
2. A readiness to assume responsibility for decision-making.
3. A high tolerance for ambiguity.
4. An interest in the problem and feel that it is important.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

5. The necessary knowledge and experience to deal with the problem.
6. Learned to expect to share in decision-making. (Teachers who have come to expect strong leadership and then are suddenly confronted with responsibility for decisions or some part in decision-making are often upset by this experience.)

If these conditions are not met, it is necessary for a supervisor to play a major role in decisions with regard to instructional supervision. Under circumstances where responsibility for important decisions cannot be shared, realistic supervisory behavior will be in the direction of a supervisor-centered program.

The essential point to be realized is that easy generalizations such as "democratic supervision" are not appropriate for all situations. Perhaps all that can be said is that the successful supervisor is he who chooses the most appropriate behavior for a given set of circumstances.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The kinds of behavior a supervisor exhibits are, in large measure, what determines success. Supervisory behavior that is typified by attitudes of acceptance and support appear to have a positive effect on morale. The enhancement of morale, in turn, tends to increase the power of a school to hold its staff and to generate a feeling that each teacher is important to the work of the school.

The effect of proper supervisory behavior on instructional improvement, therefore, has an impact that cannot be exaggerated.

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## CHAPTER 3

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# The Elements of a Supervisory Program

If supervision is to be at all successful, it must be planned. Indeed, the extent to which planning is effective is the extent to which supervision is effective. Supervisory activities based on weak planning result in weak supervision, and supervision without a plan results in no supervision at all.

The older concept of supervision with its emphasis on "overseeing" on the part of supervisory personnel is no longer pertinent to modern programs of education. These older programs were centered largely around supervisory techniques such as classroom visits and supervisory conferences. The em-

phasis appeared to be upon the inspection and evaluation of individuals on the teaching staff. Today's emphasis is, or should be, upon the learning situation rather than the teacher. While this distinction may be divided by a fine line in many cases, it provides a useful context within which supervisory programs may be discussed.

### *Definition of a Supervisory Program*

A supervisory program is a *planned* series of activities which results in instructional improvement. It is only in the context of a program that supervisory "techniques" are used to fullest advantage. Outside the context of a program, supervision tends to become whimsical and aimless.

Much has been made of the fact that supervision should vary from one school to another because of community differences, staff differences, financial differences, to say nothing of philosophical differences. While there is more than a germ of truth in this contention, it is possible to exaggerate these differences and overlook the similarities that should characterize good supervisory programs. The elements of an effective supervisory program are:

1. A careful examination of the instructional program to determine the areas most in need of improvement.
2. A set of objectives to guide the supervisory program.
3. Activities appropriate in terms of the objectives set to improve the selected area of instruction.
4. The formulation of evaluative criteria to determine the extent of improvement.

Each of these items is crucial to the orderly development of a program. Indeed, if any of these characteristics does not make its influence felt, there can be no supervisory program in any real sense for it will be essentially incomplete. Furthermore, none of these characteristics is bound by locational or staff differences. They can be considered anywhere by any school staff with sufficient time and leadership. Each of these

characteristics of a supervisory program deserves some amplification.

### *Examples of the Need for Supervisory Programs*

The need for a supervisory program may be seen in the instructional program. If a program of instructional improvement is underway in a school, it will be reflected in the classroom and will therefore be visible in a variety of ways. In the same fashion, if no program is underway, there will be little but the status quo in evidence in the classrooms. One can be certain that schools in which no attempt is made to individualize instruction, in which little provision is made for ability differences, in purchasing instructional equipment, but rather in which defensive gestures are made about "grade standards" and strict promotion policies are schools which have no supervisory program worth the name.

There is some evidence that there are schools in which little attention is paid to improvement programs if classroom instruction is a valid criterion for judgment. Jarolimek<sup>1</sup> conducted a study in and around a large metropolitan area to determine the extent to which teachers individualize instruction. His results make dismal reading. Data for his investigation were gathered from observations and interviews of sixty fifth grade teachers. This group's teaching experience ranged from one year to over twenty-five years, with a median of eight years of experience. The median age of this sample was thirty years. In terms of age and experience, therefore, the sample does not appear to be unusual.

These teachers responded to several questions which indicated the extent to which they followed commonly accepted examples of good practice. In response to the question: "*Do you group children for instruction in each of the following*

<sup>1</sup> John Jarolimek, *A Study of Current Practices of Individualizing Instruction in Minnesota Schools*, unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1955.

(reading, arithmetic, and social studies)?” the following is reported:

Field	Yes	No	Per Cent Yes	Per Cent No <sup>2</sup>
Reading	49	11	81.6	18.4
Arithmetic	28	32	48.8	51.2
Social Studies	29	31	48.4	51.6

Only in reading classes is there a serious attempt to group for instruction, and this attempt is not serious enough. In spite of all that has been learned about ability differences in the last sixty years, approximately half of these teachers make no attempt to group for instruction in arithmetic and social studies.

When asked: “Do you use a basic textbook for each of the following (reading, arithmetic, and social studies)?”, the responses were as follows:

Field	Yes	No	Per Cent Yes	Per Cent No <sup>3</sup>
Reading	59	1	89.3	1.7
Arithmetic	60	0	100.0	0.0
Social Studies	55	5	91.6	8.4

Of course there is nothing wrong per se (and perhaps a good deal right) about having a basic text in each of these fields. However, the real meaning of these responses comes to light when viewed in the context of the next set of responses to the following question: “Does each child have the same textbook in each of the following (reading, arithmetic, and social studies)?”

Field	Yes	No	Per Cent Yes	Per Cent No <sup>4</sup>
Reading	14	46	23.3	76.7
Arithmetic	56	4	94.4	5.6
Social Studies	55	5	91.6	8.4

What is there to say about evidence such as this? One might take a sanguine view and be grateful that most of the teachers in this sample group for reading instruction, al-

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

though almost a quarter of them do not. However, even the most tolerant cannot help but wonder at the kind of instruction that will provide for ability differences in reading and utilize mass instructional techniques for other subject-matter areas. One might ask, almost plaintively, where is the supervision? What kind of improvement programs are going on in schools where it is standard procedure to recognize the need for a multiple approach to learning in the reading class, only to ignore this need in areas where the reading tasks are more difficult?

It is easy to blame teachers for this singularly imperceptive approach to learning, and there would be some justice in placing a part of the blame in this fashion. Even without supervision, teachers at our present stage of educational development should be able to do better. However, it must be emphasized that most of the blame must be assumed by those charged with developing supervisory programs. In the face of Jarolimek's evidence, one can only conclude that strong leadership is lacking in the schools he studied. Such a conclusion is inescapable. Well over half of these teachers said that if they were free to make any changes they wished, they would use "lots more material."<sup>5</sup> It is the clear responsibility of supervisors and administrators to supply these materials and in this instance, at least, they have not done so. Until supervisory personnel are willing to do what is already well known and possible, any talk of improvement will remain just talk.

There is further evidence of a more indirect nature that points up the need for more sophisticated supervisory programs. This evidence deals with matters that are often beyond the control of supervisors, such as experience, background, training, and work load of the teaching staffs. Deficiencies in these areas result in supervisory deficiency. While these matters may be beyond the control of supervisors and principals, they are not beyond the control of superintendents and boards of education.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

One of these obstacles is found in class size. The 1950 N.E.A. report on class size in elementary schools indicates an average of thirty-one pupils per teacher. While this might be an acceptable average, it is high and points to the fact that many classrooms are overcrowded. Indeed, more than one in every ten teachers had forty or more pupils enrolled.<sup>6</sup> The problem has become more acute since that time, particularly in city schools. It was estimated in 1955 that 57 per cent of the number of children in urban elementary schools were enrolled in classes considered to be too large. More than a half million children were in classes of forty children or more while almost two million others were in classes ranging from thirty-five to thirty-nine children.<sup>7-8</sup>

While no one seriously defends the concept of large classes, the idea is sometimes rationalized on the basis of evidence relating to the achievement of children in large and small classes. For example, a study by Spitzer<sup>9</sup> concluded that there was no significant difference in achievement between large and small classes. He pointed out that any plea for smaller classes would have to be made on grounds other than achievement. One of the explanations for this lack of difference between the achievement of large and small classes might well be that there are few if any differences in the methods employed in large and small classes. Where small groups are taught by the same methods as large groups, where page assignments are in vogue, and where each child uses the same

<sup>6</sup> NEA Research Division, "Teaching Load in 1950," *Research Bulletin* 29, February, 1951.

<sup>7</sup> NEA Research Division, *Glass Size in the Elementary Schools of the Eighteen School Districts with a Population of 500,000 or more, 1955-1956*, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1957.

<sup>8</sup> NEA Research Division, *Glass Size in the Elementary Schools of Urban School Districts, 1955-1956*, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1956.

<sup>9</sup> Herbert F. Spitzer, "Class Size and Pupil Achievement in Elementary Schools," *Elementary School Journal*, October, 1954, pp. 82-86.

mathematics and science was welcome, indeed. It would be interesting to know, however, how many school people charged off, like Leacock's hero, willy-nilly in several directions at once without first determining whether or not these were programs most in need of attention. It may be that poor programs in reading, social studies, and spelling are being perpetuated because of these pressures. The point is that improvement programs should be the result of a careful examination of needs and be *relevant* to a particular situation.

This relevance can be assured by an examination of the instructional program which is based on information and data that are readily available. Certainly the most obvious and, in many respects, the most reliable source of data is found in the results of the standardized testing program. When analyzing these data, one should be looking for trends and not the occasional soft spot. For example, if the results of a standard-test battery reveal a consistent underachievement in one of the areas tested, one has reached a *startling* place. This underachievement must be examined to learn if it is real or apparent. The test scores must be viewed in the light of some important influences that may not stem from instruction at all. High on the list of such influences is the ability of the children studied.

In this regard it should be pointed out that there is in many quarters a regrettable tendency to deal only with norms when studying test results. This practice invariably obscures more than it clarifies. For one thing it leads to the pernicious practice of regarding norms as standards. When this happens, the standards become eminently mediocre, since a norm is the midpoint of a distribution of scores.

Instead of dealing with central tendencies (class averages, and/or medians) it is far more important to deal with test scores in the light of individual capabilities. Thus in a real sense the only standards worth talking about are the abilities which the children possess. Viewed in this fashion, a child

with low ability will be held to a lower standard than a child with high ability.

To try to describe individuals in terms of national norms is a frustrating mental gymnastic. What is important is not where children *are* on any given scale, but how far each has come since the last measurement and whether this progress is commensurate with his ability. If the general picture of *progress* is unsatisfactory, something should be done about improving instruction.

Analysis of test data, important as it is, is not enough. One point is that standard tests measure only a part of the instructional program in a direct fashion, usually the skill subjects. While careful interpretation of such data can shed some light on the degree of content learning, such as the influence of reading, mathematics, and language skills on social studies and science, such interpretation must be made cautiously. In addition, test data, even where they directly measure a curricular area, must be supplemented by teacher judgment and other sources of information, such as progress as indicated by class work, teacher-made tests, and other types of teacher-prepared materials. This information in the hands of an alert staff can tell much about the need for instructional improvement. Indeed, only in this fashion can the whole picture be viewed in perspective.

This examination of need demands leadership on the part of the supervisor. It is here that his technical skill will come into play, not only in amassing information, but also in presenting it clearly and sensibly.

It should be emphasized, however, that staff participation in identifying needed improvement is crucial. This participation is important for at least two reasons. First, the teaching staff, by the very nature of its job, is in an excellent position to assess needed improvement. Teachers are a part of the instructional scene every day, and, because of this, they can see the need for educational improvement from a unique vantage point. Supervisors can share this vantage point only to a lim-



ited degree since they cannot be in any one classroom all day every day. Consequently, supervisors who overlook or who do not actively encourage staff participation in the identification of need for instructional improvement are missing the single most important source of information.

Staff participation in the identification of needs is important for a second reason. There is reason to believe that teachers will identify themselves more readily and more closely with problems in which they have a part. If it is true that the participation of the teaching staff is necessary to improve instruction, then it follows that this participation should be as wholehearted and unstinting as possible. To elicit this type of participation, the teaching staff must be granted a share of the responsibility for planning and executing the supervisory program. Since the direction of the program is dependent on the determination of instructional needs, it is of utmost importance that the staff be instrumental in this determination.

It would be an oversimplification to assume that all instructional needs will be perceived by test results or staff perceptions. Some important tasks are literally thrust upon the schools by society. These tasks stem from needs inherent in society and which are sometimes overlooked by those school people who examine the trees and not the configuration of the forest.

Without drawing the matter to too fine a point, one might argue that increased attention to science, mathematics, and foreign language instruction received its largest impetus from non-professionals. Here were needs recognized by elements of society and mandated to the schools. It is probably true that clear mandates will be handed to the schools in the future and these will be based on emerging conditions in local, national, and international society.

Of course, in the last analysis it is the school people who must deal with these needs by reducing the tasks they impose to manageable proportions. The importance of staff participation in this work is clear.

## *Objectives to Guide the Supervisory Program*

A second general characteristic of a good supervisory program is a sound set of objectives to guide the program. Statements of purpose have become so commonplace in instruction that their importance is sometimes overlooked. There are statements of objectives for lesson plans, for units, for courses of study, and for the total process of education. There is a similarity between the objectives for instruction and the objectives set for a supervisory program. Both are intended to direct the activities designed to further the programs of each. Because of this similarity of intent, the objectives for a supervisory program share both the virtues and the faults of objectives designed for instructional programs.

If the objectives for a supervisory program are to give direction to supervisory activities, they should be formulated in such a way as to avoid the meaningless, high-sounding, empty slogans that too often characterize statements of purpose. This type of purpose or objective is often found in courses of study and there is a danger that it may transfer to supervisory programs. The problem of setting of objectives for instructional programs has been studied in some detail and some useful guidelines have been proposed.<sup>11</sup> While less is known of the problem of objectives for supervisory programs, there is no reason to think that the lessons learned from formulating objectives for instruction should not apply.

For example, some studies indicate that in many cases

<sup>11</sup> William H. Burton, *Guidance of Learning Activities*, 2nd ed., Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., New York, 1952, Chapter 10. Benjamin S. Bloom (Ed.), *A Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., New York, 1957. Nolan C. Kearney, *Elementary School Objectives, Report Prepared for the Mid-Century Committee on Outcomes in Elementary Education*, Russell Sage Foundation, 1953. James Curtin, "The Problems of Objectives in the Social Studies," *School and Society*, January 4, 1958, pp. 11-12. Ernest Horn, *Methods of Instruction in the Social Studies*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1937.

objectives for instruction are unlimited in their ambition. They often attempt the impossible, and are therefore pointless. These studies also point up the fact that objectives are too numerous. Although there appears to be some improvement in this regard, there are still grounds for a plea for economy in the number of purposes. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that objectives set for instructional programs are couched in language that is ambiguous at best and uncommunicative at worst. Certainly when faults such as these characterize statements of purpose, objectives tend to be unattainable.

It should follow that objectives formulated for supervisory programs deserve more than the ritualistic approach often given to other types. The importance of meticulous attention to supervisory objectives can scarcely be exaggerated, for the objectives guide the program. The aimlessness of much supervision is due in large part to the lack of a sharply focused attack. This lack can be remedied in large part by clear and sensible purposes that not only indicate the point of effort but also the most appropriate means of expending this effort.

One of the clearest statements regarding the formulation of sound objectives is given by Burton.<sup>12</sup> He points out that objectives should be:

1. *Dynamic, indicative of action and likely to promote it with normal individuals.*
2. *Socially desirable*, that is, a recognizable directional progress goal leading toward the accepted general aim of education.
3. *Achievable*, by the level of maturity of the group, and permitted by available resources.
4. *Developmental*, that is, leading to constantly higher levels of achievement.
5. *Varied enough to care for the varied aspects of the total organism and for individual differences.*
6. *Limited enough in number to permit a definite organization without undue diffusion of effort.*

<sup>12</sup> Burton, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

that *must* be done if there is to be a program at all. It would be better all around if this objective were taken for granted and attempts made to indicate how time set aside for instructional improvement is to be spent. If any sort of a worthwhile program is to be undertaken, the matter of time will be taken care of automatically. There is no point in cluttering up a good statement of purposes with activities that cannot be avoided.

3. *To further the experience of teachers with democratic processes.* This objective for supervision is singularly amorphous, although it enjoys enormous popularity. It may miss the point of supervision altogether, for it is possible to further democratic processes apart from supervisory activities. Furthermore, if this is set as a major objective for supervision, as it often is, the emphasis is on something other than supervision and is therefore not "dynamic" in terms of Burton's use of the word. That is, it is not "indicative of action" with regard to supervision. The danger lies in the fact that the development of democratic processes may become an end in itself and therefore fail to promote supervision and the improvement of learning.

Perhaps these examples will be sufficient to point up the danger. In this regard no better admonition than the one Horn cites in this Biblical reference can be presented: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."<sup>14</sup>

### *Activities to Fulfill the Objectives of the Supervision Program*

The third characteristic of a good supervisory program is the formulation of activities to accomplish the objectives of the program. In later sections of this book, these activities will be dealt with in some detail. However, it is important at this point to emphasize a basic premise fundamental to super-

<sup>14</sup> Horn, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

visory programs. *Activities selected for the accomplishment of the purposes of the program must be interrelated to achieve maximum effectiveness.* The activities commonly associated with supervision include such things as classroom observation, supervisory conferences, staff meetings, and professional meetings such as institutes, conferences, and conventions.

There is reason to believe that many of these supervisory activities are regarded as independent functions with little or no relationship to each other. There have been articles on how to conduct staff meetings without regard to the relationship of staff meetings to other aspects of supervision. The investigations into supervisory conferences yield results in evidence that can only be regarded as alarming. "Score cards" have been developed for classroom observations that succeed admirably in directing the attention of the observer to minutiae and therefore often result in a complete lack of attention to the purposes of supervision.

What is needed is an amalgamation of these activities so that each is related to the ongoing program. An excellent illustration of how this can be accomplished is furnished by the work of Tetz and his staff.<sup>15</sup>

During the spring months of the school term, a committee of teachers was selected to initiate the supervisory program for the following year. This committee was made up of representatives from each of the elementary schools and the high school. From their contacts with each of the faculties, the most significant problems were winnowed out and submitted to the entire faculty for its selection of the most important.

Once this selection has been made, plans were underway for the preschool workshop. Appropriate speakers were secured, arrangements for meetings and meals were made, and the entire workshop was lined out before the end of the

<sup>15</sup> At the time of the execution of this program, Mr. Tetz was superintendent of the Monmouth-Independence, Oregon, public schools.

that *must* be done if there is to be a program at all. It would be better all around if this objective were taken for granted and attempts made to indicate how time set aside for instructional improvement is to be spent. If any sort of a worthwhile program is to be undertaken, the matter of time will be taken care of automatically. There is no point in cluttering up a good statement of purposes with activities that cannot be avoided.

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<sup>14</sup> Horn, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

useful to the entire faculty. Sixth, and last, the program used all supervisory aids in ways that were related to the program itself and to each other.

It is this last characteristic that needs emphasis. Supervisory activities need a *program* to lend weight and direction to them. But the formulation of a program itself, while enormously helpful, is no guarantee that such weight and direction will be given. These activities must be planned as a part of the program rather than incidental to the program. This means that classroom observations will have a purpose and not be the result of a superintendent's edict that all principals "shall spend fifty per cent of their time in the classrooms." This means that staff meetings will have agendas and will be centered around problems of significance rather than assemblies of teachers who are read to by the supervisor or principal. In similar fashion, conferences, institutes, and professional gatherings will be pointed toward the accomplishment of a program and its objectives. Without a program and careful planning, these supervisory activities are largely wasted because they lack a sharp focus.

### *Evaluation of the Supervisory Program*

The fourth characteristic of a good supervisory program, the formulation of evaluative criteria, will be treated in a later chapter. It is appropriate to point out here, however, that such evaluation must be pinned as securely as possible to the objectives set for the program. Furthermore, the evaluative process must be sufficiently comprehensive to deal with all appropriate aspects of the learning situation. It must not deal only with test scores, although these are important, but also with more intangible aspects of learning. It must also deal with the mechanics of supervision itself so that future supervisory programs will avoid the deficiencies and faults of the past.

school year. For this particular year the theme selected was "What should be the instructional goals for our school district?"

The preschool workshop was designed to *raise* problems, not to solve them. In this respect, this workshop differed from many others which attempt too much in too little time. All that was sought was a series of intelligent questions which would form the basis of the year's work. The questions were raised by an outside consultant, staff members of each of the schools, administrative personnel, members of the board of education, and by representative laymen. The last step in this preschool workshop was the formulation of means to deal with the problems raised. Each building staff was given a piece of the work to deal with. Throughout the year each staff, through faculty meetings, conferences, reading, discussion, and writing, worked at its task. At specified intervals the entire staff of a school district met to report progress, and review and revise its work as a result of the criticisms and suggestions that arose from these meetings. At the close of the school year, a committee of teachers put these various reports together into a single document, while a new committee began to work on next year's program. Thus at the end of the school year, each staff member had a complete record of the program and knew a great deal about the theme of the following year's program.

There are several noteworthy aspects of this program. First, it was continuous. It dealt with a program over an extended period of time. Second, it was concerned with a situation that was inherent in this school setting. It did not come about as the result of extraneous pressures. Third, there was a high degree of staff involvement. Almost every teacher, supervisor, and administrator contributed to the program. Fourth, the program was developed by the staff around problems important to them. Fifth, the program resulted in tangible results. The final report was prepared in a way that was



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## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Because a well-formulated supervisory program tends to focus the attention of a professional staff on central issues, it is difficult to overestimate its importance. The characteristics of a supervisory program described in the foregoing sections of this chapter are suggested to aid those who may not have been centralizing supervisory efforts. Evidence was cited to point out that supervisory services in some schools are not amalgamated into a program. Causes for lack of supervisory programming may stem from the pressures of large classes, inexperienced teachers, excessive teaching load, and teachers without adequate training. However, the possibility that the effort to develop supervisory programs has not been made in many schools should not be overlooked.

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PART 2

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The Methodology  
of Supervision

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## Classroom Observations and the Improvement of Instruction

There is no substitute for classroom observation for only by this means can supervisors gain the firsthand knowledge and experience necessary to participate in improvement programs. While valuable insights into instructional problems can be gained from other sources of evidence, such as test scores and supervisory conferences, such insights are essentially vicarious. In the last analysis instructional improvement takes place in the classroom, and it is only there that

A supervisory program can be only as effective as its on-going activities permit it to be. Supervision in many schools is characterized by the use of such activities as classroom observations, supervisory conferences, staff meetings, and attendance at teacher institutes, conferences, conventions, and other types of professional meetings. It may be logically deduced that these activities will exert maximum positive influence on supervision when they are pointed to a single aim or cluster of aims. Thus at every step in the supervisory program the interrelatedness of these activities must be appraised to insure that the focus of supervision does not drift.

Because of this interrelatedness, it is a bit artificial to treat each of these activities in a discrete fashion. However, there are issues presented by each of them that deserve special treatment, and, perhaps by discussing each of these activities separately, the problems inherent in each may be better understood so that a better amalgamation may be effected.

It should also be pointed out that some of these activities will be carried on independently outside the context of a program. For example, individual supervisory work with new teachers or with teachers faced with special problems peculiar to their classroom will demand supervisory work in addition to the program. These activities are not substitutes for the program, but should be carried on in a parallel fashion.

Perhaps the generalization that should be borne in mind is that supervisory activities are most rewarding when they are carried on within the framework of a program. In addition, supervisory activities for special reasons will be used in addition to the program.

At the risk of being commonplace, it should be stated that no instructional improvement will be made from erroneous or partial diagnosis of instructional needs. While such diagnosis made exclusively on the basis of classroom observations would perhaps be inadequate, any diagnosis made without classroom observations would be equally inadequate.

It would surely be strange if supervisors did not have some evidence of instructional need before setting up a classroom observation for the purpose of analysis. Indeed, such evidence will probably be the incentive for such visits. For example, review of test scores may indicate a "soft spot" in an instructional area. While such information, of course, is important, it is scarcely illuminating. Lack of achievement is traceable to some causes which are correctable and some which are due to the limitations inherent in the learner. Further examination of data readily available to the supervisor will indicate whether or not these deficiencies can be corrected in view of the nature of the learners in the classroom. If these data reveal no good reason for lack of achievement, then one must assume, at least initially, that the fault lies somewhere in the instructional pattern.

Among the questions that a supervisor might ask in this regard are: (1) What is the attitude of the children toward this phase of their school work? (2) Is sufficient attention being paid to the motivational aspects of the work? (3) Is sufficient attention being paid to the ability differences within the class? (4) Are classroom procedures designed in such a fashion as to make the children feel a part of the work? (5) Is there any evidence that the teacher is either overtly or subliminally indicating to the children a disinterest on his part? (6) Are there extraneous factors such as excessive playground noise or an uncommon amount of traffic in the hall during this period that may be detracting from the class's ability to devote its full attention to the work?

Questions such as these can only be answered through visits to the classroom. Some may object that some of these

it can be confirmed with any assurance. For those who feel that classroom observation has diminished in importance in recent years, one can only cite Liebman when she says:

"Of the various techniques used by principals for supervising the program, none exceeds in effectiveness or in helpfulness that of constructively purposeful visiting. Consistent and continuous contacts with teachers focused on the instructional program seem to be basic to effective supervision."<sup>1</sup>

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF OBSERVATIONS TO THE PURPOSES OF THE SUPERVISORY PROGRAM

At the outset it should be stated clearly that most purposes for classroom visits should derive from the purposes of the supervisory program. From this viewpoint the following purposes for classroom observation seem to have unusual importance:

1. Observations to analyze learning situations to determine instructional need.
2. Observations of instructional procedures.
3. Observations to check drift away from objectives.
4. Observations to evaluate classroom environment and facilities.
5. Observations to evaluate new instructional procedures.

### *Observations to Analyze Learning Situations to Determine Instructional Need*

Observations to analyze learning situations are essentially diagnostic. The intent of this type of observation is clear from its title. It should be emphasized, however, that classroom observations designed to analyze instructional need are high indeed in the hierarchy of purposes established for such visits.

<sup>1</sup> Department of Elementary School Principals, NEA, "The Elementary School Principalship—a Research Study—57th Yearbook," *National Elementary Principal*, Washington, D.C., 1958, p. 34.

The point remains, however, that there are times when rather strange teacher behavior is directly accountable for lack of progress through an instructional program, and, if this is the case, it must be assessed as part of the learning situation.

Thus far the diagnosis of need has been treated externally; e.g., by evidence not drawn directly from the teacher and by people other than the teacher. Diagnoses on these bases are certainly useful, but a caution is in order. Teachers have ego involvement in their work and consequently may be a bit jarred by the sudden application of expertise. Such application may be regarded by teachers as failure on their parts to see for themselves what an observer sees all too clearly. What is needed is careful consultation and planning with teachers before and after classroom visits so that they feel some identification with the diagnostic process. Teachers should not feel that they have had something done to them or even for them. Rather they should feel that they have had a share in appraising instructional need.

### *Observation of Tryout of Instructional Procedures*

Improvement of instruction implies change. Often this change will not be a radical overhaul of the instructional program although this is not beyond possibility. However, in most instances this change will be reflected in adjustments in the instructional program. Therefore one of the important purposes for classroom observation is to observe this adjustment to determine whether or not it is doing what was intended when it was put into practice. Observations to assess the success of instructional procedures will be viewed against the backdrop of plans and preparations that were made well in advance of the classroom visit itself. Indeed, observations of this type are a natural result of such planning.

For example, in a school where there was concern over progress in spelling, particularly in the middle grades, aims, content, and methodology were reviewed in an attempt to



questions tend to focus the attention of the visitor on the teacher rather than the learning situation. However, no teacher can ever be divorced from the learning situation, and, as a vital part of it, he must come in for his share of the examination. In any event both the behavior of the teacher and the children are important aspects of any learning situation and are important in diagnosing any needs in the program.

In this light the following situation may serve as an illustration. A sixth grade classroom teacher who was regarded as having strong vocational promise suddenly began to experience difficulties for no reason that the principal could determine. Since the principal was responsible for the administration of two schools, his classroom observation and his supervisory work in general was drastically curtailed. At least this was his contention. In any event a special supervisor was called in to observe this young man's work to try to determine the cause for these sudden difficulties. After only ten minutes in the classroom the reason became abundantly clear. About ten days previous to this supervisor's visit, one of the children had brought a parakeet from home. This was an unusually quiet bird when it was in the cage, but the problem grew from the fact that the teacher adopted the rather strange custom of letting the bird fly about the classroom. Of course, the children enjoyed this enormously, particularly when the bird lighted on a child's head or shoulder or upon the very paper on which he was working. It did not take any supervisory magic to see in an instant that this small bird was enormously distracting to all the members of the class. The remedy was as sure as it was simple. The bird was taken out of the classroom and the class at once began to proceed on a more normal course of activities.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, all instructional problems are not so dramatically dealt with, nor are the causes so easily discernible.

<sup>2</sup> This example, as is the case with all the illustrative material in this volume, is drawn from the writer's own experience as a supervisor.

### *Observations to Check the Drift away from Objectives*

The problem of instructional objectives is a continuing one. The formulation of appropriate objectives to give direction to instruction is never an easy task. Even in instances where objectives are carefully prepared, there is always a danger that instructional practices will drift away from these objectives. Chamberlin found this to be a serious problem in the group he studied. His sample consisted of second and fifth grade teachers from three different school systems. He chose a number of instructional goals from the social studies course of study from each of these systems. After he had combined these objectives into a single list, he presented them to the teachers of the three school systems and asked them to identify four objectives from the list that they felt to be of greatest importance in teaching their social studies program. The results were dismal indeed. Teachers from one school system chose only 42 per cent of their own objectives and indicated more objectives from the other two school systems. Teachers from the other two systems indicated 38 per cent and 37 per cent, respectively, of their own goals as being important to their social studies teaching.\*

Because teaching is a day-to-day job and because it is filled with pressures, many of which are unfortunately extraneous to the act of teaching itself, it is not surprising that objectives are sometimes neglected. Classroom observations have a unique function in this regard. Teachers are not likely to detect the subtle drift away from important purposes set for instruction. Sometimes this drift is almost imperceptible and if allowed to go unchecked may result in the teaching for wrong objectives, or worse, for no objectives at all. Of course teachers can do a great deal to prevent this by careful assessment of their purposes as they teach. However, some teachers need help in this regard, and it is the supervisor's task to

\* Charles Chamberlin, *The Effectiveness of Curriculum Guides in Implementing School System's Objectives*, unpublished master's paper, University of Minnesota, 1960.

find reasons for the drop in achievement. It became apparent that there was little agreement among the teaching staff about the aims of spelling or the method to be used. As a result there was overlap of content in some instances as well as a serious gap of instruction from grade to grade. After a series of meetings, the staff reached agreement on the instructional goals of spelling, the content to be taught at each grade level, and the methodology to be used. This agreement came after a great deal of reading, consultation, and logical analysis. Everything was as "right" as it could be before it was put to the test in the classroom. Data on test scores, transfer to other kinds of writing, and the pupil-teacher attitudes were carefully kept. This information was extremely helpful in reaching judgments about the success of the program as it developed. However, such information, it was agreed, could be assessed only against the backdrop of the actual teaching act. As a result of classroom observations, certain adjustments were agreed upon in several instances to increase the instructional efficiency of the program. Continuous evaluation of these adjustments as they were made indicated general improvement. These evaluations were confirmed by the impressions gained through classroom observation.

The foregoing illustrates two important concepts. First, the inevitability of interrelating supervisory activities to effect instructional improvement is certainly indicated. No one supervisory activity could have begun to accomplish the instructional improvement that resulted from the balanced utilization of a variety of supervisory techniques. Second, there is illustrated the fact that classroom observations for the purpose of assessing the ongoing program are crucial to the success of the program. No other source of information can appraise the intangibles that are a part of every teaching act. Test scores, conferences with teachers, and other sources of vicarious evidence are essential to assessing the developing program, but the overtones can only be appraised through careful observation on the part of both supervisor and teacher with the resultant pooling of their impressions.

It may be said with *almost* no fear of contradiction that the only way of providing diagnostic help to teachers who have this problem is through classroom observations. There is no other way.

## ELEMENTS OF THE SUPERVISORY VISIT

### *Planning the Supervisory Visit*

Classroom visits should be planned with the supervisory program sharply in mind. This bit of advice may appear to be gratuitous in view of the emphasis that has been placed on a supervisory program. However, in practice many supervisory visits are made without reference to the program. In other words, many supervisory visits are made for the sake of having supervisory visits. Of course this is alien to the concept of the supervisory program. Within the framework of a supervisory program, classroom visits must be employed only when they can contribute to the ongoing program. Supervisory visits must be subordinated to the purposes of the program. If this practice were to be conscientiously followed, two decided improvements would immediately arise: (1) There would be a sharp reduction in the number of aimless and whimsical classroom observations, and (2) the classroom observations that were carried out would tend to be far more pointed and directed.

In order to plan for supervisory visits within the framework of a supervisory program it is necessary, of course, to develop these plans in the terms of the purposes of the program. The question that then must be raised is what contribution can classroom visits make to fulfill the aims of the supervisory program. After this matter has been decided, more specific items in planning for a classroom visit can be treated. These more specific steps will include:

supply this help. Classroom observations can be of great assistance in this respect.

Let us assume for example that an important objective of arithmetic instruction is the ability to compute without the aid of pencil and paper. Obviously, if this objective is to be fulfilled, the class must be given opportunities to perform this kind of computation. However, it may be that in a classroom in a system with this objective the children spend most of their time, perhaps an unconscionable amount of time, on pencil and paper computation. It would appear obvious then that there has been a move away from an important objective. Perhaps all that is needed is a reminder by the supervisor that additional time and effort be given over to this activity. In any event, this is a problem with which an "outsider" can be of enormous help. This is particularly true since the move away from teaching for established objectives tends to be a subtle day-by-day occurrence whose negative effects tend to be cumulative.

### *Observations to Evaluate Classroom Environment and Facilities*

The quality of any instructional program is greatly dependent on the setting in which it occurs. There are great variations in the kinds of environments that teachers provide for their classes. In some instances rooms are quite bare and consequently are less than inspiring. On the other end of this environmental continuum there are classrooms which are virtually inundated with a wealth of instructional equipment strategically placed for maximum effect. There is a great deal of emphasis placed on library corners, science corners, social studies corners, health corners to the point where there are more "corners" in classrooms than there are, in fact, corners. This, of course, is a happy situation, but there must be concern for those teachers who do not avail themselves of instructional resources in this fashion.

interested in gathering information about, say, the testing phase of the spelling program in an elementary school. After consulting the daily program he finds the days and times set aside for spelling instruction. He visits the classrooms at these times, only to find that some teachers have shifted their spelling time for one reason or another. Other teachers are teaching spelling but are not testing on this day. From his observations he receives only a fraction of the help he had anticipated. His only recourse is to return at another time and hope that he is successful. He may also privately wonder if the elementary school program is not a bit *too* flexible.

If these observations had been planned in advance, the supervisor would have gained the information he desired and he would have wasted no time in what may have been interesting but (in terms of his purpose) irrelevant visits. He no doubt learned that potluck supervision, like a potluck dinner, can result in some nasty shocks.

In addition to saving time for both teacher and supervisor, planning the observation tends to create a more pointed and sharply defined learning experience. If the primary purpose for classroom observation is to gather data for an improvement program, the lesson should be planned in such a way as to present this information. If, for example, word recognition techniques are being studied, there is little value in observing a reading lesson in which this problem is presented in a peripheral fashion. What is to be observed should be made the focus of the lesson. This can be assured only through planning with the teacher.

Of course the steps followed in the planning session will vary from situation to situation. However, there are some useful generalizations that hold for a variety of situations. These are:

1. The establishment of purpose for the observation.
2. Outline of procedures and materials to be used.
3. Provision for evaluation of the observation.

1. Planning with the teacher.
2. Checking the records of the class before the visit.
3. Checking records of previous visits.
4. Checking records of appropriate supervisory conferences.

### *Planning with Teachers*

Of course it is difficult to be specific about what kinds of plans will be made with teachers since the purpose of supervisory visits will vary in terms of the purposes of the supervisory programs.

The important point to be emphasized here is that such planning should occur with teachers. Often one has the impression that classroom observations are carried on unilaterally; that is, supervisors drop by the classroom unannounced in order to gain a "true picture" of what the teacher is really like. While this approach to supervisory visits may have merits in certain circumstances, it is foreign to the concept of a supervisory program. Here the overriding purpose is to help teachers and children improve teaching and learning. Certainly the teacher is an extremely significant person in the fulfillment of this purpose, and therefore should help plan the observation.

Supervisor-teacher planning is essential if the purposes of the supervisory program are to be carried out. However, there are other equally important reasons why planning with the teacher makes good sense. One of these reasons relates to the problem of time. Certainly supervisors and teachers alike are no strangers to the pressures imposed by a rather short instructional day and a school year of approximately thirty-six weeks. A great many things must be accomplished within these time limits and instructional improvement is only one of these. Consequently, the time devoted to supervision should be used as efficiently as possible. Yet time can be and often is wasted because classroom observations are not planned with teachers. For example, a supervisor may be

constitutes readiness for the lesson to be observed. It is the wise supervisor who encourages the teacher to explore these considerations with a minimum of directive behavior. In this aspect of the planning, the supervisor's task is to offer some suggestions when asked and to raise questions about doubtful points. He should defer to the teacher's experience with a class about matters concerning the class and its make-up.

It is sometimes a bit troublesome for supervisors to give some teachers very much latitude in planning and often with good reason. In cases where the classroom teacher is relatively inexperienced or lacks confidence, supervisors rightly feel compelled to be more directive than they would be with teachers who have the poise and confidence which stem from experience.

There is, therefore, no general rule for supervisors to follow in making judgments about how much direction to give regarding techniques and materials. It is probably better in the long run to err on the side of non-direction. Any needed improvements that show up in the lesson will then be instructive to both supervisor and teacher. It is interesting to note that in many cases the real problems that crop up in the lesson are those which were not anticipated by either supervisor or teacher and consequently harping on any potential problem before the lesson is taught is apt to be risky.

### *Evaluating the Classroom Visit*

The problem of evaluating a classroom visit unfortunately has been made more complex than it needs to be. This is particularly true in those quarters where there is a compulsion to use scales for such evaluations. The trouble with many "evaluative scales" is that they do not evaluate, and they are seldom scales. They are, for the most part, restricted to "objective measures," and seldom has anyone investigated their objectivity. Consequently, mundane matters such as "venti-



### *Establishment of Purpose*

It should be emphasized that the establishment of purpose is the *sine qua non* of the observation. Why is this particular lesson being observed? What information is supposed to be gathered to aid the program of instructional improvement?

Questions such as these tend to refine purposes and are probably not asked often enough. A lack of sharp purpose for classroom observations is undoubtedly the reason why so many visits lack direction. Purpose should guide the enterprise. Where there is no purpose there is no guidance, and aimlessness and lack of enterprise are inevitable results.

Of course, purpose is not lacking in all observations. Sometimes the observer has his purposes clearly in mind, but he has not bothered to tell the teacher what they are. This leads to some interesting difficulties, not the least of which may be overapprehensive behavior on the part of the teacher. In any event, lack of purpose or different purposes held by supervisor and teacher cannot possibly guarantee a desirable degree of instructional upgrading. Indeed, where this kind of pattern persists, one might anticipate a downgrading in instruction, largely caused by a loss in morale.

### *Outline of Procedures and Materials to Be Used*

The outline of procedures and materials to be used in a classroom observation is largely a matter of professional judgment on the teacher's part. Decisions regarding methods and materials must be based on a number of considerations which the teacher is likely to understand better than anyone else, including the supervisor. Among these considerations are the extent of ability differences in the class, peculiar learning difficulties on the part of individual children, the experiences, both in school and out of school, that the children possess, and the sequential developmental aspects of previous work which

nature, and consequently far more useful than many suggestions that are often based on trivial matters unrelated to the purpose of the observation.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Supervisor's Role During the Observation*

Once again the importance of purpose must be emphasized with regard to the observation. If the observation is being made at all, it is being made for a reason, or at least it should be. These reasons vary in terms of the supervisory program, of course, and all that one can do is to admonish the observer to have the purpose for the observation firmly in mind as he observes. It would be helpful if one could do more than admonish, but specific suggestions about what to look for simply cannot be made apart from purposes, and, since purposes vary the preparation, a detailed list of observational activities that apply in all situations would be futile.

The job of the supervisor as he observes is to witness and analyze the situation in which learning is taking place. This means a situation in which something is or should be happening. His reason for witnessing the learning situation is to help to improve the teaching and learning that is taking place. He has this orientation because the observation is a part of the supervisory program and because he has planned the observation. Furthermore, he has in mind the fact that he and the teacher will discuss the observation in the not too distant future. These factors have influenced the supervisor to assume certain points of view about the observation, and these points of view determine the salient features of the lesson to which he will be alerted. If he has no program from which to oper-

<sup>4</sup> For example, a supervisory observation form was developed for the use by elementary school principals. This form provided for listing the strong points of the teacher and also "teacher weaknesses." Both parts of the form were to be completed in every instance. In the case of one superior teacher all that the desperate observer could suggest under weaknesses was that the teacher should "change to shoes that are less noisy!"

lation" and "room appearance" assume as much importance as the motivational aspects of the lesson and the extent to which ability differences are met. Indeed, in some "evaluation" forms, the latter are not even mentioned.

One might find fault with these formal scales for yet another reason. These forms come very close to ratings, and there is the risk that teachers will regard them as such. Should such confusion exist in the minds of the teaching staff, the use of such forms will tend to be self-defeating. The focus of attention will not be on mutual problem-solving by supervisor and teacher, but rather result in a kind of game which might be termed "enemy at the gatesmanship." The supervisor is one who at all costs must be impressed or at least fooled. In a later section of this volume the problem of rating will be dealt with extensively. It is sufficient to state here that the divisive result of this approach to evaluation is to be deplored.

How then should a classroom observation be evaluated? Any evaluation must be made in terms of the purposes of the lesson. This single consideration is perhaps the most important, for it removes the teacher from the focus of evaluation and puts him in perspective as only a part—an important part to be sure—of the total teaching-learning experience.

The evaluation of the observation, like the planning session, can then become a mutual affair. The best and perhaps the only way to achieve this is through a discussion of the lesson by supervisor and teacher, with each bringing his own insights to the evaluation. The purposes of the observation can be reviewed, and the method and materials can be discussed within this framework. Problems can be identified and questions raised by both teacher and supervisor. Successful aspects of the work can be identified for possible use in the schoolwide supervisory program.

Aspects of the lesson that were not successful can also be identified and alternative procedures brought forward. Thus the provision for "next steps" is built into the evaluation procedure. These will be of a highly specific and directional

that a later chapter of this volume will deal exclusively with this problem.

There are other means of following up a classroom observation, none of which is as satisfactory as a conference. However, there are occasions when these other means must be used. These are usually written *communications* of some sort. They may take the form of an informal letter or they may take the form of a formal memorandum. In any case it is well to recognize that a written follow-up of a lesson is a risky business at best. This is because a written communication has both words and style which may be intended to elicit pleasure, but which in fact may contain some jarring overtones. Teachers often read not only between the lines but also between the words, and, because they may confuse the follow-up letter or memorandum with an evaluation, they may perceive criticism where in fact there is none. This does not mean that written communications should not be used. Rather it means that they should be as well prepared as possible.

There are a few guides that are helpful in composing a follow-up letter or memorandum:

1. *Begin with a positive, and if possible, a congratulatory remark.* The first impression is likely to be important. If a positive feeling is solicited and achieved early in the communication, the remainder, even if critical, is likely to be read with some cordiality. The converse, of course, is likely to be true.
2. *Do not mention matters about which you are unsure.* The only intelligent way to treat procedures about which you have questions is *through* questions. Unless a time can be provided for the teacher to answer or at least discuss these questions, there is no point in bringing them up at all.
3. *Make criticisms or suggestions tentative.* A supervisor may see something that appears to be in need of improvement. However, it should be kept in mind that the teacher may have a perfectly sound reason for following a given procedure. When writing up the observation, it might be well to point up the procedure by indicating that there may be some reservations about it, but by further indicating that the teacher is probably

ate, if he has not planned the observation, and if he has no intention of following up the observation, there is no point in attempting to formulate "specific points" to observe. If he has done these things, such a formulation is unnecessary.

Some supervisors may protest by saying that there are reasons for classroom observations that do not fit the conditions imposed by a supervisory program. They point out that there are valid reasons for observations if only to satisfy themselves that things are "going well." There is validity in this contention. No one would suggest that supervisors should not feel free to visit classrooms for reasons that lie outside a supervisory program. These reasons will be treated in a later section. However, it must be emphasized that these more casual types of observations should not be confused with the more rigorous classroom observations that are deliberately planned and executed for a purpose clearly understood by both teacher and supervisor. The danger lies in confusing the two types. Some supervisors who pride themselves on "always being in the classroom" really observe very little, for their reasons for observing are not clear and while they have a set of general impressions which are valuable, they have developed no plan for instructional improvement.

### *Follow-up of Classroom Observations*

Teachers tend to regard classroom observations as significant events. Many worry about them beforehand and wonder about them afterwards. Certainly supervisors should behave in a way so that these tensions are reduced. A way to accomplish this is to follow up the observation by some appropriate means. While courtesy dictates that a classroom observation be commented upon in some fashion, the real purpose of the follow-up is to aid in effecting instructional improvement. The best way of accomplishing this purpose is through a conference with the teacher. In fact, the supervisory conference is of such significance to the improvement of instruction

## OTHER PROBLEMS RELATED TO CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Questions often arise about some procedural aspects of classroom observations. Among the more important of these are: (1) How long should an observation last? (2) Should notes be taken during the observation? (3) If notes are taken, should a copy be left with the teacher? (4) Should the supervisor participate in the work being taught to the class?

*How long should an observation last?* There is no prescription in terms of hours and minutes about the length of a classroom observation. The simplest and most acceptable formula to be followed is for a supervisor to enter a classroom at the beginning of a lesson and stay through until its completion. Of course simple courtesy demands that he make his entrance as unobtrusively as possible, and simple courtesy equally demands that he remain through the lesson and not interrupt it by a premature exit. In planning for the amount of time to be spent in an observation, the supervisor should allow more time than he thinks will be necessary. Any time that he may have on his hands as a result of budgeting too much time can certainly be spent in some other useful activity.

*Should notes be taken during the observation?* There appears to be a sharp division of opinion about this. However, unless a supervisor has a photographic mind and total recall, it is probably better for him to take notes during an observation. Many people feel that this constitutes a distraction, however, and is a practice which should be assiduously avoided. However, one cannot generalize about this. If the relationship between the supervisory personnel and the teachers is of the right kind, there will be no hostility or suspicion engendered by the fact that the supervisor is taking notes. In fact, if everyone realizes that the purpose of a super-

aware of these reservations. If he is not aware of them, he will be after reading the letter, and also his dignity has not been damaged. If he is aware of these reservations, the supervisor appears to be wise indeed.

4. *The tone of the communication is as important as its content.* This admonition is reminiscent of the idea that what a supervisor does is not as important as how he does it. While one would not like to pursue this idea to its illogical conclusions, it does possess a germ of truth, particularly with regard to written communications. While it might be difficult to write a wildly enthusiastic letter to a teacher that would be offensive, it is equally difficult to write a critical letter that will not be read with some misgivings. Consequently a great deal of attention must be paid to the way in which the letter is written. The tone should be as supportive and helpful as possible. It should, in short, indicate an attitude of "I am on your side."

Perhaps an example of a communication which embodies these suggestions may be helpful:

Dear Miss ——:

There is nothing I would rather do at this moment than to tell you personally how much I enjoyed my visit to your class this morning. Because our schedules prohibit our meeting until a future as yet undesignated time, perhaps this note will suffice.

The progress your children have made is impressive. Of particular note is the way your class has welded itself into a mutually supportive group. One certainly detects an atmosphere of warm enterprise.

I shall have to give some thought to what you did with Pete's reading group during the introductory phase of the lesson. I've not seen this done before, and indeed, I've discouraged some of our people from trying it. Perhaps my reservations were unfounded, for it came off all right this morning. Perhaps after we've talked about it, my point of view will change completely. It hasn't yet, however, and I'm looking forward to discussing it with you.

The real purpose of this note, however, is to tell you that your group presented an impressive display of progress. I leave for our meeting a more detailed discussion of a very fine lesson.

Cordially,

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believes that the supervisor is carrying away with him some dread secret which will be communicated to someone else. If this is the practice of supervision in any particular situation, leaving notes with the teacher will not solve it.

*Should the supervisor participate in the work being taught?* The most acceptable role that a supervisor can assume while he is observing a class is one of total immobility. His presence should be as unnoticed and as natural as a piece of furniture in the classroom. He is there to observe, not to interfere. His presence in the classroom lends an air of artificiality to the proceedings that should not be enhanced by any gratuitous remarks that he might feel impelled to make. Sometimes supervisors are unwilling victims to a teacher's misguided good intentions. This occurs most often when a teacher turns to the supervisor and asks him to comment on some aspect of the proceedings. Flattering as this may be, it constitutes an intolerable interruption in the ongoing work of the class.

## VISITS OUTSIDE THE CONTEXT OF THE PROGRAM

The foregoing sections of this chapter emphasized the importance of relating classroom observations to the supervisory program. There are, however, reasons for classroom visits which lie outside the supervisory program. Such supervisory visits may stem from:

1. A directive from the central administration.
2. A need to check on unprofessional teachers.
3. A request from a teacher.
4. A parent's complaint.
5. A need to keep informed of school practices.

### *A Directive from the Central Administration*

This is undoubtedly the worst reason of all. Superintendents and boards of education who hand down such directives



visory visit is to be constructive in terms of instructional improvement, it would seem that teachers would insist that supervisors take copious notes during a classroom observation.

The alternative to taking notes in the class is to have the supervisor go back to his office and write his notes on the basis of what he can remember. However, such a procedure must be made on the assumption that a supervisor can go directly to his office without an interruption on the way or without having someone waiting for him in the office when he arrives. However, perhaps it should be repeated that the problem is not so much the problem of should one or should one not take notes during an observation but rather what kind of a relationship has been established between supervisors and teachers that would make this a problem at all.

*If notes are taken, should a copy be left with the teacher?* Those who advocate the practice of leaving a copy of the notes with the teacher assume that most supervisors have literary talents which they probably do not possess. If it is difficult to compose a letter or memorandum as a follow-up to an observation, how much more difficult would it be to compose notes during a classroom observation that would carry the tone and the content important to retaining and, indeed, building the confidence of the teacher in the supervisory process. The notes that a supervisor takes during an observation will probably be of most use to him and to him alone. There will be comments made in crisp, terse language which, if left on the teacher's desk, are certain to be misinterpreted. Actually, some of the notes which will be taken will not be legible simply because of hasty handwriting due to the pressure of events as they develop as the observation progresses. Consequently, it is undoubtedly better for a supervisor to take his notes with him and recast them in more acceptable language and tone before showing them to the teacher. Here again the question of the soundness of the relationship between supervisor and teacher might be raised. Those who believe that supervisors should leave notes with the teachers ordinarily rationalize this on the basis that the teacher be-

tration. In any event in such a situation someone needs to be enlightened. If a supervisor's work is so bad that supervisors must be told how much of their time should be spent in classroom observations, actions far more fundamental than administrative admonitions are necessary. These actions may take the form of increased in-service work for the supervisory staff, or even a change in supervisory personnel. If supervisory work is only *thought* to be so bad as to require administrative action of this sort, action should be taken by the supervisory personnel to dispel the misconceptions of the central administration. If the supervisory work is good, the evidence will be at hand to prove it.

### *Classroom Observations to Check on Unprofessional Teachers*

Observations to check on teachers who do not live up to their professional obligations constitute a most distasteful supervisory duty. Indeed one sometimes gains the impression from some of the literature that this problem does not exist, and, if through some strange set of circumstances, it does exist, it is the fault of supervision. While this point of view is laudable because it underscores the vital and all-pervading responsibility of supervision, it overlooks the fact that the individual staff member must assume the major share of responsibility for his own professional behavior. It is a melancholy fact, well known to many practicing supervisors, that the professional conduct of some teachers is less than dazzling. The problem faced by supervisory personnel is to decide what to do about such conduct.

The point of view that is consistently held throughout this volume is that supervision should be helpful and supportive. However, there are times when practices of certain staff members are difficult and, at times impossible, to tolerate; consequently, these practices must be changed. Of course before supervisory action can be taken, evidence must be at

are usually well intentioned and probably worried about the status of supervision in their schools. It is doubtful, however, that such action has any therapeutic results. Actually, such steps may aggravate an already bad situation. It is not too much to expect that some improvement should occur from supervisory visits to classrooms. When the reasons for such visits are based on an edict, improvement, at least a stable improvement, is not likely to occur. Of course one should not completely rule out the possibility of instructional improvement resulting from such visits, for they may spur activities which go beyond sitting in the classroom and checking on the ventilation. But the chances are slight that they will, for they spring from the wrong motivation.

One also might wonder about the effect on teachers when they realize that the only reason for supervisory visits is to satisfy the superintendent or board of education. They might assume, for example, that "reports" will be made back to the central administration. This can scarcely be calculated to foster enthusiasm about their teaching assignments.

Deplorable as this practice is, it exists, and often supervisors are unwilling victims to shortsighted policies. Some elementary school principals have been instructed to spend at least 50 per cent of their time in classroom observation. Reactions of those principals known to the writer who received such instruction ranged from amused tolerance to actual hostility. Never was such a directive regarded as an example of exemplary leadership. The most competent are likely to regard such action as interference while the least competent are just as willing to waste their time in the classroom as in the office.

No matter how a supervisor feels about such a directive from the central administration, it is his job to follow it. However, this does not mean that he cannot or should not work toward a change. This is best done by substituting a plan that is better than the one offered by a central adminis-

### *Request by Teachers for Classroom Observations*

Another reason for visits outside the framework of a supervisory program is presented by the teacher who requests such a visit. If the evidence regarding classroom observations is valid, it is probable that most of these requests will arise in schools where there is a strong supervisory program. This means that those supervisors who have the least amount of time available for such visits will have the most demands placed upon them. The converse is, of course, true. Schools with supervision characterized by aimlessness and whimsey are not likely to be filled with teachers clamoring for classroom observations. One measure of the quality of supervision, subjective though it may be, is the number of requests for such visits.

Perhaps nothing is as gratifying to a supervisor as a request to visit a classroom. These requests should be honored wherever possible for they usually arise from some activity about which the teacher feels strongly. For example, a first grade teacher who has had considerable difficulty with her reading groups is finally achieving a breakthrough. She is, of course, pleased and wants as much as anything to share her pleasure with the supervisor. To refuse or delay a request for a visit to her classroom is a bit disappointing to the teacher, and should these requests be refused or delayed with any frequency, they will undoubtedly stop. This can probably be read accurately as a diminution of morale on the teacher's part.

Teachers' requests for classroom observations may also stem from instructional problems. Since the supervisory program cannot deal with all phases of instruction simultaneously, it is quite probable that help will be requested about something outside the limits of an ongoing improvement program. For example, a school may be in the process of upgrading its instructional program in arithmetic. It is devoting a great deal of time and energy to this program but while this

hand upon which to base proposals for action. The means of gathering such information will depend on the nature of the problem. Certainly classroom observations will be helpful in this regard.

In discussing observations in the context of a supervisory program, it was pointed out that such visits should be planned in advance with the teacher. However, a visit for the purpose of gaining information about a teacher who is shirking his obligation to his children should be unannounced. The purpose of the visit is to see how things go *typically* in his classroom. If this teacher does not usually plan his work, if he is usually careless about matters of time, if he usually gives little attention to the details of instruction, an unannounced visit will be quite revealing.

There are some supervisors who object to such procedures. They feel that such practices are unfair and underhanded. They also feel that if supervisory practices were sound in the first place, there would be no need for unannounced visits. Those who object are probably sincere in assuming that *all* teachers wish to do the best possible job, that *all* teachers are professionally motivated, and that *all* teachers regard themselves as professionals and not job holders. Because *all* teachers are working actively at their own perfectability, it is thought that unannounced visits are unnecessary, if not actually insulting.

Of course such a point of view has merit only to a point. Beyond this point it becomes naive. If we are to assume that *most* teachers wish to do the best possible job and that *most* teachers are professionally motivated, there could be no serious disagreement. This leaves, however, a small group of people whose conduct cannot be described as professional and who, therefore, must be helped if they are amenable to help. If they are not, they should be helped out of the profession. In any event classroom observations will be of enormous aid in determining what course of action should be taken.

is taking place other problems are likely to occur. When this happens, the teacher may well request help from the supervisor. If this sort of request is construed by the supervisor as an annoyance and an interference with the ongoing program, the result is likely to be interpreted by the teacher as indifference. Such an interpretation tends to have two results, neither of them desirable. First, the teacher is not getting help he probably needs and to which he is entitled. Second, he will probably stop asking for such help and perhaps generalize his attitude into a feeling that supervision in any form is a rather ineffective means of achieving instructional improvement.

Perhaps the generalization to bear in mind is that a problem is a problem whether it occurs within the limits of a program or not, and it should be dealt with promptly. This is true in any circumstance, but particularly true when a teacher asks for guidance.

### *Classroom Observations to "Keep in Touch"*

The observation whose purpose is to "keep in touch" may be a part of a supervisory program, but often is not. Every supervisor should know as much as he can about the total school program. This is true because it is good supervision but also because of an extremely practical reason; it is expected of him. Perhaps nothing is as embarrassing for a supervisor than to be asked searching questions about a phase of the instructional program for which he has only feeble answers.

Classroom observations constitute the most effective means of maintaining close contact with the instructional program. Certainly no supervisor can have firsthand knowledge about the school program without firsthand experience with it. There is also the matter of "supervisor improvement" to be considered. While the maintenance of knowledge about the school program is important and constitutes a compelling reason for classroom observations, it is also important that the

activities. Daily there should be an integration of supervisory techniques with a goal of instructional improvement as the integrative factor.

Such problems bearing on classroom observations were also reviewed, including the problem of time, note-taking, and announcement of visits.

It was also emphasized that visits outside the context of a supervisory program are unavoidable and usually arise from such matters as an order from the central administration which is deplorable, a need to check on an unprofessional teacher, a request from a teacher, and a need to maintain a grasp of the instructional program.

Finally, some cautions about classroom observations were pointed up. These included a caution to make the observations positive and constructive, to relate them to other supervisory techniques. A caution to avoid too hasty and ill-conceived evaluations was also emphasized.

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devoted to this problem in a later section of this volume, but a word about it here is appropriate. Quite often immediately after a classroom observation teachers ask for an evaluation of their work. This is, of course, a most natural reaction, but supervisors should bear in mind that such a request may contain a well-concealed pitfall, unforeseen by either teacher or supervisor. Because evaluation is at best a tricky matter, it should be made only after sufficient reflection. An offhand comment, especially if it is a bit critical, is apt to be misunderstood by the teacher. This is his pitfall. He has received what is to him an undeserved criticism. His natural resentment is the supervisor's pitfall. Of course it might be argued that such instances are rare, but if they happen at all it is more than sufficient.

What is one to do when pressed for an evaluation immediately following a classroom visit? Just as the Boy Scout is admonished to "Be prepared," the supervisor might well heed the same advice. A general comment of a complimentary nature is best. After this is delivered with a ring of sincerity, the press of other matters can conveniently remove the supervisor to the quiet of his own office where he can review the observation in a more orderly fashion and prepare an adequate interpretation.

The important point to remember is to be on guard against the rash comment. It serves no useful purpose to attempt an evaluation without preparation, and such practice can do a great deal of harm.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This chapter considered the purpose of classroom observations in the supervisory program. It was emphasized that classroom observations will be most effective when they are keyed to the supervisory program and related to other supervisory



## CHAPTER 5

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# The Supervisory Conference as a Means to Instructional Improvement

The importance and significance of the supervisory conference lie in the fact that it is a direct, firsthand contact with the teacher. All other methods of communication, with the exception of the faculty meeting, are necessarily indirect, usually through a memorandum, bulletin, letter, and similar communications. In a majority of instances, such written communication has its place and is, indeed, the most expeditious and efficient means of communicating. However, there are

KYTE, GEORGE C., *The Principal at Work, rev. ed.* Boston: Ginn & Company, 1952, Chapters 14 and 17.

LIGGITT, W. A., "Classroom Visitation," *Bulletin of National Association of Secondary School Principals*, December, 1950, pp. 236-245.

classrooms for an average of twelve minutes. They made written comments after approximately 2 per cent of their observations and oral suggestions after only one in every seven visits.<sup>2</sup> A study by Shannon points up the fact that supervisory conferences tended to be negative and fault-finding in nature. Shannon's study of more than 1,400 notes made by supervisors found that more than three out of four of these notes constitute a negative, highly critical approach to supervision rather than a positive, supportive attitude.<sup>3</sup>

When this gloomy evidence is coupled with the findings reported by Briggs and Justman regarding more recent practice in supervisory conferences, it certainly points up the fact that the conference technique is not utilized to a degree that remotely resembles desirable practice, and that supervisors do not even begin to make use of an enormously helpful supervisory technique. Briggs and Justman found, for example, that many teachers in their sample had not been called to a supervisory conference and of those who had, twenty-four of them considered the conference to be good, twenty of them considered the conference to be fair, and thirty-six regarded the conference as poor. One can only regard such evidence as a challenge to do better.<sup>4</sup>

In a more recent study Lieb investigated the utilization of supervisory conferences among first-year teachers.<sup>5</sup> On the assumption that supervisory conferences would be used most widely with the most inexperienced staff, Lieb assessed the perceptions of the supervisory conference held by young new teachers.

<sup>2</sup> James M. Hughes, "A Study of High School Supervision," *School Review*, February, 1926, pp. 112-122.

<sup>3</sup> J. R. Shannon, "An Analysis of High School Supervisory Notes," *Educational Administration and Supervision*, January, 1928, pp. 9-14.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas H. Briggs and Joseph Justman, *Improving Instruction through Supervision*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1952, p. 349.

<sup>5</sup> Donald J. Lieb, *A Survey of the Use of Individual Supervisory Conferences in Assisting First Year Teachers*, unpublished master's paper, University of Minnesota, 1962.

times in the supervisory process when written communications simply will not do. It is then that a supervisory conference must occur. In some situations, to be pointed up later, there is no substitute for a conference, and, if through some set of circumstances one cannot be held, the wise supervisor will do nothing.

### *Definition of a Supervisory Conference*

A supervisory conference may be defined as a planned discussion between supervisor and teacher about some important aspect of the educational enterprise. While this definition may be regarded by some as a truism reduced to an absurdity, it is instructive to reflect on the fact that the evidence regarding the supervisory conference indicates that even so primitive a definition often has not been well understood.

### *Evidence Regarding Supervisory Conferences*

At the outset one must admit that the evidence regarding supervisory conferences, although somewhat dated, is scarcely encouraging. This evidence reveals three major shortcomings with use of this supervisory technique:

1. Supervisory conferences are not held often enough.
2. The content of supervisory conferences is not always relevant.
3. Supervisory conferences tend to be negative and fault-finding in nature.

For example, one study indicates that 35 per cent of a group of principals held conferences after classroom observations, but approximately only 2 per cent discussed the visit.<sup>1</sup> Another study indicates that in one semester a group of principals visited about 40 per cent of the classroom teachers under their supervision. These principals remained in the

<sup>1</sup> James M. Hughes and Ernest O. Melby, *Supervision of Instruction in High School*, Public School Publishing Company, Bloomington, Illinois, 1930, p. 41.

The teachers in this study were asked to characterize their supervisory conferences with regard to a set of general remarks. Responses to these questions indicate the following:

1. Approximately 12 per cent felt that their conferences were too long.
2. Approximately 26 per cent felt that their conferences were too short.
3. Approximately 51 per cent felt their conferences to be about the right length.
4. Approximately 56 per cent felt the conferences were not dominated either by teacher or supervisor.
5. Approximately 27 per cent felt the content of the conference to be irrelevant to their problems.
6. Approximately 26 per cent felt the conference to be "generally not helpful."
7. Approximately 20 per cent felt that the purposes of the conference were not understood.

While Lieb's study is more encouraging than the investigations reported earlier in this chapter, it appears that the conference as a supervisory aid has not yet come into its own. One might hopefully conjecture that there are excellent examples of supervisory conferences which have gone unreported. In view of the fact that the supervisory conference is so highly regarded by teachers and supervisors alike, it only is to be hoped that such examples will spur increased activity in this neglected field, with beginning and veteran teachers alike.

## THE PURPOSES OF SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE

The overall purpose of the supervisory conference is to further the progress of the supervisory program. Obviously such a purpose must subsume certain other purposes, each of which will contribute to the central objective. These subsidiary objectives may be regarded as:

With respect to the frequency of the supervisory conference, Lieb's data reveal spotty practice. Slightly more than half the teachers in his sample conferred with supervisors one or more times per month.

TABLE 1 • FREQUENCY OF CONFERENCES HELD BETWEEN SUPERVISOR AND FIRST YEAR TEACHER\*

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
One Per Week	17	13.4
Two Per Week	19	15.0
One Per Month	29	22.8
Other	62	48.8
Total	127	100.0

\* *Ibid.*, p. 15.

When asked about the degree of help supervisory conferences afforded them, the teachers in Lieb's sample indicated little of an encouraging nature. Approximately two-thirds of this group felt that conferences were of little or no help.

TABLE 2 • DEGREE OF HELP AFFORDED BY SUPERVISORY CONFERENCES\*

<i>Degree of Help</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Much Help	42	33.1
Little Help	70	55.1
No Help	15	11.8
Total	127	100.0

\* *Ibid.*, p. 31.

When asked to describe their supervisory conferences, more of these new teachers felt them to be poor than excellent and more felt them to be fair rather than good.

TABLE 3 • GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE\*

<i>Description</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Per Cent</i>
Excellent	11	8.6
Good	43	33.9
Fair	50	39.4
Poor	23	18.1
Total	127	100.0

\* *Ibid.*, p. 35.

view must be one of improvement *while we have them*. In addition, there are among this group many who should be career people. The day has passed when teachers stop teaching because of marriage. Thus conferences with members of this group should have as a general purpose the arousal of a desire for some improvement and, for those with exceptional ability, the arousal of a desire to remain in the teaching profession.

The task is more difficult in dealing with those who have lost the desire for self-improvement. It was indicated earlier that this loss of interest in self-improvement has causes which, at least in theory, may be identified and dealt with. These causes may stem from administrative injustice, fancied or real; from salary schedules that are so narrowly conceived that only formal education and experience can cause advancement; from supervisory indifference to efforts of self-improvement; or from heavy and inequitable work loads. The point to be kept in mind is that a supervisory conference furnishes the best setting to determine these causes and thereby indicate the changes that are necessary to rekindle a professional zeal.

Thus far only the motivational aspects of this type of conference have been touched upon. Certainly in conferences designed to stimulate self-improvement, the entire orientation of the supervisor should be one of motivation. However, this should not indicate that the conference will be solely concerned with an "onward and upward" inspirational pep talk. To achieve its purpose the conference must be specific to the conferee. Thus the supervisor must be highly aware of the potential of the teacher with whom he confers, together with all the insights he can muster about where the teacher should make his best efforts. Should the conference result in the teacher making a successful effort, this will bring with it a satisfaction that is apt to be self-generating and lead to greater self-improvement. This successful effort is not likely to come about if the conference consists of high-flown talk about "the importance of good teaching."

1. Self-directed improvement.
2. To capitalize on strengths.
3. To aid in analysis of the learning situation.
4. To administer criticism.
5. To plan for classroom observations.
6. To evaluate instructional procedures.
7. To set goals for instructional improvement.

### *Self-Directed Improvement*

The hallmark of any profession, regardless of the field, is self-improvement. However, self-improvement is not likely to occur unless there are approbation, analysis of work quality, and guideposts for future action. Because most people need an "outside" view to assess such matters, a supervisory conference can be most helpful in helping staff members to become more objective about their skills and abilities.

It may also be necessary to instill in some staff members a desire for self-improvement. Most people, when asked, indicate interest in furthering their skills and abilities, but some do not really behave in such fashion. Generally, these people will fall into two groups. One is composed of teachers who will not persist in the profession and who are working to bring in a second income or who are looking toward the day when they will not need to work at all. Of course not all or even most of this group can be described as uninterested in professional improvement. However, some are, and there is no point in overlooking this fact.

The other group can be described as career teachers, many of whom have spent years in the teaching profession. For some of them the desire for self-improvement has become dulled. This may be due to a variety of reasons, such as non-recognition of their efforts or a futile feeling that self-improvement really does not make any difference in the quality of instruction. Of course each of these groups must be dealt with differently, but with the same end in mind. With respect to those who might be described as non-career teachers, the point of



view must be one of improvement *while we have them*. In addition, there are among this group many who should be career people. The day has passed when teachers stop teaching because of marriage. Thus conferences with members of this group should have as a general purpose the arousal of a desire for some improvement and, for those with exceptional ability, the arousal of a desire to remain in the teaching profession.

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different materials can be used to advantage? What different or more sophisticated evaluative techniques can be used? Clearly, these are matters that demand a face-to-face, a give-and-take approach. The conference, and perhaps only the conference, can furnish the necessary setting in which plans can be made for superior teachers to extend themselves even further. In the process the supervisor will also be extending his own competence which is, all considered, a most satisfactory arrangement.

### *To Aid in the Analysis of the Learning Situation*

To help a teacher analyze her own teaching activities is a commonly accepted purpose for a supervisory conference, and among the more important purposes from the teacher's point of view.

Often this type of conference follows a classroom observation, or better, a series of observations over a number of days in the same curricular area. Of course the content and methodology will determine what is actually said and done during this type of conference, but some generalizations will be helpful.

To begin with, the teaching act, reduced to its simplest components, consists of setting goals or objectives, providing experiences to achieve these goals and objectives, and providing some evaluative procedures to measure how well they have been achieved. While such a description of a teaching act may be an oversimplification, it presents three components which must always be present if it is to be complete. From this emerges the direction a supervisory conference should take if it is to be analytical in nature. Each component can be assessed in relation to the other two. Questions such as the following can be discussed:

1. What were the goals set for the work?
2. Were they appropriate to the range of abilities found in the class?

### *To Capitalize on Strengths*

In view of the fact that conferences are often regarded as corrective measures, it should also be emphasized that one of the chief purposes of the supervisory conference is to build on strength. It would be strange indeed if the members of a teaching staff did not possess differences in teaching interests and abilities. While the weaknesses are often made the centers of attention, the strengths are sometimes regarded as the matters of good fortune by supervisors. As a result only the teacher's interest and drive are likely to bring about further improvement. Clearly this is not enough. Further development of areas of strong competence is a serious supervisory responsibility. To be sure, teachers will need help with curricular areas about which they are unsure, but to do this at the sacrifice of developing marked superiority in other curricular areas is a policy that is characterized by narrowness.

In this regard the relationship of the supervisory conference to the supervisory program suggests itself. If a supervisory staff and teaching staff are working toward a well-established goal designed to improve instruction in a particular curricular area, the matter of individual teacher competence is subordinated to the overall program. If the program is dealt with conscientiously and effectively, teacher competency, far from being ignored, will be enhanced. The teachers who are not strong in the area with which the program deals will become stronger, and the strong teacher will become superior. The conference as an integral part of the program will contribute to this process of adding strength.

Just as a strong student stretches, or should stretch, a teacher, so a strong teacher will make unusual demands upon a supervisor. What, for example, can be done to make a superior reading program even better? What can the superior teacher do that she is not now doing with her reading program? What additional goals can be set? What additional or

3. Were they clearly understood by the class?
4. Did the class accept them as their own?
5. Did the class help formulate the goals?
6. Were the learning experiences designed to accomplish the goals?
7. Were the assignments so differentiated that each class member could contribute to the accomplishment of the goal?
8. Were the instructional materials varied enough to satisfy the varying abilities of the class?
9. Did the learning experiences lead to successively more complex concepts and understandings?
10. Did the evaluative techniques reveal the degree to which the goals were achieved?
11. Were the evaluative techniques appropriate to the types of understandings perceived by the class?
12. What did the evaluative techniques reveal in terms of understanding and misconceptions?
13. In view of the evaluation what will need to be retaught and to whom?

Questions such as these will usually serve as the basis for a discussion of a learning situation. Some may protest that such questions are too obvious to deserve serious consideration. In light of current practice regarding supervisory conferences, one can only deplore the fact that they are not raised often enough. Surely such an approach to instructional analysis is to be preferred to the questionable rationalization that there are many ways to teach anything, which is true, and therefore one way is as good as another, which is not true.

The importance of such analysis is not to show teachers what is considered correct by the supervisors. Rather its importance lies in the fact that attention will be focused upon essential matters of teaching that are sometimes overlooked in practice. Recalling Jarolimek's data<sup>\*</sup> it would be interesting to raise these questions with the overwhelming majority of teachers in his sample who used the same arithmetic book at

<sup>\*</sup> John Jarolimek, *A Study of Current Practices of Individualizing Instruction in Minnesota Schools*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1955.

the same page for all children in their classes. Perhaps a review of their goals and their teaching procedures might be considered obvious, but it appears that this obviousness has escaped those who are responsible for such a review.

### *To Administer Criticism*

There are times when it becomes a supervisory responsibility to point out certain matters that are clearly in need of improvement. This is not a matter where generalizations come easily, and, perhaps all that can be said is that when these matters arise, they are best dealt with in a conference. Certainly a memorandum or another form of communication can seldom be tempered to convey criticism without misunderstanding.

### *To Plan for Classroom Observations*

While supervisory conferences are highly regarded as a follow-up to classroom observations in theory, if not in practice, they are not often thought of as a means of planning a classroom observation. This purpose for supervisory conferences is important for at least two reasons. First, it tends to make the work observed more pointedly in line with the work of the supervisory program. Second, it may add to an individual teacher's confidence and security by cooperatively setting up the work to be observed. While the teacher may have some concern about how well she taught the lesson, she need have no concern about the appropriateness of the lesson.

### *To Evaluate Instructional Procedures*

Within the context of a supervisory program the process of evaluation is continuous. However, there must be a distinction made between the evaluation of instructional procedures and the evaluation of teachers. As a practical matter the two are so closely bound to each other that such a distinc-

tion is difficult. However, even in face of such difficulty, it is not impossible to make the setting for evaluation a learning situation. Then the matter of teacher behavior *as a part of the learning situation* becomes a matter for legitimate concern. All too often the orientation is evaluation of the teacher rather than an evaluation of learning. When this occurs, the orientation is wrong. The more important concern is subordinated to the lesser.

In practice this means that during the conference the teacher's work will be evaluated and not the teacher. Such a distinction may be a fine one, but it is one of enormous importance as the conference unfolds. Both supervisor and teacher can maintain a more objective attitude about what was done if they are not concerned about the matter of personal likes and dislikes.

Of course a conference set around the problem of evaluation of procedures will take into its scope many of the questions raised about analyzing the lesson. However, the focus of attention is apt to be narrower. For example, during a spelling lesson a teacher may request the children to spell orally and individually the words missed in the lesson. The supervisor may feel that this is an inefficient and misdirected use of both the children's and teacher's time. This *phase* of the lesson then will become the subject of a supervisory conference. In a similar manner any part of any lesson about which either teacher or supervisor has a question is a proper matter for evaluation, and the conference provides an excellent setting for such evaluation.

### *To Set Goals for Instructional Improvement*

While the overall goals for the supervisory program are perhaps best formulated by the faculty groups, there is a need for individual attention to this matter. The formulation of such goals by groups sometimes results in individual misunderstanding. Indeed an individual misunderstanding may

be an indication of a more widespread confusion. The first evidence of confusion may turn up in a conference setting.

Another aspect of goal formulation may occur before the general problem is presented to the entire staff. For example, the supervisor may wish to consult with certain faculty members whose judgment is unusually good with regard to the problem at hand. A series of conferences with these people will tend to indicate the nature and scope of the preliminary work that must be done before the entire staff becomes involved. Such procedures are simply a recognition of the wisdom of using special staff competencies in appropriate situations. These competencies can be assessed and utilized in a conference setting.

## PLANNING THE SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE

It is understood that the success of a conference is dependent at least in part on the quality and amount of planning that precedes it. For this reason it is recommended that: (1) the purpose of a conference be reviewed; (2) that a decision be made about what ground is to be covered in the conference; and (3) that a decision be made about the mechanics of the conference such as the time and place.

### *Review of the Purpose for the Conference*

The question of purpose must be raised before setting up a supervisory conference. The purpose of the conference should be clear in the mind of the supervisor since its direction and quality depend on how well it is understood. The purpose of the conference should also be clearly understood by the teacher concerned.

On the surface the problem of purpose seems to be one that can be dealt with easily. However clear cut it may seem,

tion is difficult. However, even in face of such difficulty, it is not impossible to make the setting for evaluation a learning situation. Then the matter of teacher behavior as a *part of the learning situation* becomes a matter for legitimate concern. All too often the orientation is evaluation of the teacher rather than an evaluation of learning. When this occurs, the orientation is wrong. The more important concern is subordinated to the lesser.

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example, if the purpose for the conference is to evaluate certain instructional procedures, it is assumed that the supervisor will have seen these procedures in the classroom. In addition to this kind of preparation the supervisor may wish to review the literature bearing on the procedure under consideration. Its appropriateness in terms of the class's make-up will need to be weighed. Its consequences in terms of future work will need to be judged. Only after these matters have been considered will it be desirable to set up a conference with the teacher.

There is much to be said for a conference agenda. It presents an orderly plan to be followed. Teachers tend to appreciate a businesslike, yet informal, atmosphere, and they tend to dislike conferences that seem to go nowhere and go there very slowly.

Deciding the ground to be covered, then, is crucial to the success of the conference. Whatever time is spent on it is time well spent. The absence of such planning will probably only add to the already dismal record that supervisory conferences have achieved.

### *The Time, Place, and Length of the Conference*

The more mechanical aspects of the conference are likely to be viewed with considerable interest by teachers. The time of the conference should be as convenient as possible for staff members. It is easy to foresee the tenor of a conference at which the teacher is making polite affirmative noises while he worries about how many of his children are now standing on top of their desks instead of sitting at them. Even though a supervisor feels reasonably certain that a supervisory conference can be scheduled during before or after school hours, he is well advised to proceed slowly. Most teachers have plans for these times, and, although they are willing to change these plans for important reasons, they are not likely to be overjoyed at a sudden change because of a supervisor's whimsey.

it presents some exasperating moments in practice. Sometimes conferences can and do occur at the drop of a hat. Supervisors who pride themselves on their "open-door" policy are particularly susceptible to being called upon without warning. Their excessive availability, although a source of favorable comment, can set the conditions for some rather uncomfortable moments. Because conferences are often initiated by teachers, supervisors often run the risk of entering upon them without any idea of what is likely to develop. A certain amount of this is unavoidable and perhaps even desirable.

It is true that supervisors develop some adroitness in dealing with such matters. Yet, because it is easy to be maneuvered into untenable positions without adequate preparation, it is an excellent idea not to get too involved in discussions of importance without some time to think about them. Perhaps the best thing to do in such circumstances is to bring the problem into the open and defer discussion until sufficient time has elapsed to permit a considered judgment. The point to be remembered is that the most fruitful conferences will result when everyone concerned knows why the conference is being held.

### *Deciding What Ground Needs to Be Covered*

When one considers the evidence about supervisory conferences, one can conclude, among other things, that a certain amount of irrelevance is to be cherished. While there is no guarantee that irrelevancies can be or should be completely avoided, they can certainly be minimized by deciding what the conference should cover.

Again the matter of purpose comes to the fore. If the purpose for the conference is clearly understood, its direction is at once set.

In addition to a clear understanding of purpose, there is usually some preparation indicated. The kind and amount of preparation depends heavily on the purpose, of course. For

best general rule is to terminate the conference when the proper ground has been covered or when the conference appears to let down. In either case there is no point in continuing, and in the latter case positive harm may result. Thus when one asks how long a conference should be, the only answer possible is the tentative one; it should be as long as necessary to achieve its purposes without tiring either the supervisor or teacher.

## CONDUCTING THE CONFERENCE

It goes without saying that the success of the supervisory conference is heavily conditioned by the conduct of the supervisor as the conference goes along. It is, of course, impossible to outline in a sequence the steps in a supervisory conference. Each is a highly individual matter, and there are few, if any, generalizations that will apply in all cases at all times. There are, however, some cautions that may be helpful to the supervisor with respect to conducting the conference. These are:

1. Start positively.
2. Do not leap to important matters first.
3. In the early stages deal with matters that yield success.
4. Do not try to accomplish too much in a single conference.
5. Remember that teachers will take away with them attitudes as well as information.

### *Start Positively*

In many respects the beginning of the conference is crucial to its success. Therefore the objective when the conference starts is to establish the best frame of mind possible. This is best done by making the teacher feel as comfortable as possible about the conference. This often represents a problem, particularly with the more inexperienced staff members.

Because a conference can be threatening to some teachers,

The remedy is as easy as it is obvious. The best plan is to simply ask the teacher well in advance about the best time for a conference and then fit this time into his plans. This is not only courteous but it is also likely to result in a better conference. The best time, then, for a conference is the most convenient time for the teacher.

Where the conference takes place is also of considerable importance. Perhaps the poorest place is the supervisor's office. Not much better is a conference room. The best place for a supervisory conference is on the teacher's home ground, his classroom. It is here that the teacher will probably feel most comfortable. If this were the only reason for holding the conference in the teacher's classroom, it would probably be enough. However, there are other important reasons for conferring in the classroom. For one thing, instructional materials are at hand. This is extremely useful for certain types of conferences. To be able to consult texts, samples of children's work, chalkboard and bulletin board materials, and the classroom file is an advantage only to be enjoyed in the classroom. The purpose of almost any type of conference is more likely to be achieved when objects and examples are at hand.

Of course the place for a conference is somewhat dependent on the time available. Clearly the classroom is suitable only when the children are absent or so engrossed in their work that they will not interrupt the conference. One cannot count on the latter condition with any degree of confidence. If the school is organized on a completely self-contained classroom basis, the only available time for classroom use for a conference is before or after school. If, however, there are special teachers for such subjects as physical education and music, this problem is eased a great deal.

The optimum length of the conference cannot be determined in terms of hours or minutes. Its length is dependent on the complexity of the problem under discussion, the attitude of the conferee, and the limits imposed by other demands of the conferee's time. If these matters do not arise, the

best general rule is to terminate the conference when the proper ground has been covered or when the conference appears to let down. In either case there is no point in continuing, and in the latter case positive harm may result. Thus when one asks how long a conference should be, the only answer possible is the tentative one; it should be as long as necessary to achieve its purposes without tiring either the supervisor or teacher.

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Because a conference can be threatening to some teachers,

they are likely to appear at the conference with some apprehension. Realizing this, the supervisor should begin the conference by commenting and complimenting the particularly strong aspect of the teacher's work. A negative approach tends to put teachers on the defensive, and it is not likely that a fruitful discussion will come from someone who wishes he were somewhere else.

### *Do Not Leap to Important Matters First*

Although there is much to be said for proceeding directly to business, it is also well to remember that some time should be allowed "settle in" to the conference. For instance if the conference is centered around a single problem, the problem will probably have aspects of varying importance. If the most significant elements are discussed at the outset of the conference, it may be that minor points may be rather anticlimactic and not receive the attention they deserve. A number of supervisors feel that only that which is treated last in a conference is remembered. This view is scarcely a compliment to a teacher's intelligence, but those supervisors who entertain this view probably do the right thing if for the wrong reasons.

### *In the Early Stages Deal with Matters That Will Yield Success*

Conferences should lead to action that will result in improvement. Yet it is quite common for problems, especially instructional problems, to be so complex that progress is not readily discernible over a short period of time. If teachers feel that their work in the area of instructional improvement is marked by a lack of progress, some incentive is likely to be lost. In the same fashion, if conferences are initially set around problems where progress is apt to be slow, teachers may lose confidence in this approach to supervision. Perhaps

the best means of guarding against the development of poor attitudes toward conferences is to set them initially around problems that can be dealt with effectively. Successful outcomes from early conferences will lead to a confident outlook about them as a means for dealing with more complicated problems which can be dealt with in successive conferences.

To those who may protest that instructional problems do not await the convenience of a staff member, one can only reply that a headlong rush into such problems before a teacher is ready to deal with them is to court failure of the most disheartening kind. Surely a hurried approach may mean delay in meeting important problems in a conference setting, but in the meantime other supervisory techniques may be used. One might also comment readily that the evidence indicates that supervisors have been getting along for years without supervisory conferences. Thus those who set a deliberate course to insure the successful use of this important supervisory technique are probably doing more than most supervisors even though their methods may result in some delay.

### *Do Not Try to Accomplish Too Much in a Single Conference*

In their best forms supervisory conferences are teaching-learning situations. Consequently the danger of covering too much material is a real one. This danger is true not only of what is discussed in the conference itself, but it may also result in another difficulty. Effective conferences should indicate plans for further action. Thus not only what is covered in the conference is important, but also what happens between conferences assumes a significance. If limits are not set regarding the amount that can be reasonably accomplished, decisions for action marked by soaring ambition rather than possible attainment will probably result. Of course what can-

not be accomplished will not be accomplished, and failure to achieve the ends determined in a conference may result in developing a sense of despair about the conference method.

All kinds of adages are brought to mind about deliberation. Rome was not built in a day; haste makes waste; more haste, less speed. Perhaps the most comforting thought to a zealous staff is the idea that tomorrow is another day and what is not possible now will surely be possible later. Perhaps the most efficacious way of guarding against the problem of an "overcrowded" conference is to plan effectively. Planning will do much to alleviate the problem, but there must also be a steadfast resistance to the injection of matters that may be interesting but irrelevant to the job at hand. This does not mean that adaptability is not to be encouraged, but it does mean that excessive "flexibility" is to be actively discouraged.

### *Teachers Take Away Attitudes from the Conference as Well as Information*

The attitudinal aspects of conferences are certainly implicit in the foregoing sections. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that conferences will contribute to supervision to the extent that teachers regard them with favor. Just as quickly as conferences are felt to be ineffective, purposeless, and irrelevant to the task of a school, their impact is lost. The insidious truth is that conferences can be all these things and still be pleasant interludes for the supervisor. This happens most frequently when there is a lack of planning beforehand and a lack of follow-up afterwards. A subtle drift away from the true purposes of the conference is likely to occur unless



## CONFERENCE FOLLOW-UP

Just as a classroom observation demands follow-up activities, so too does a conference. This follow-up may be nothing more than a written summary of the points covered during the conference, but it may also take the form of other more elaborate activities, such as classroom observations, discussion at staff meetings, and another conference. The point to be borne in mind is that a conference will ideally chart future activities, and it is these activities that need to be assessed in terms of the instructional program.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The supervisory conference is a powerful aid to instructional improvement. There is some evidence that the conference method is not utilized with sufficient skill to insure its potential.

The foregoing sections of this chapter are presented to point up the importance of supervisory conferences and to present guidelines to effective use of this important technique.

Because of the paucity of research about supervisory conferences, it is to be hoped that investigations will be launched in the areas of purpose, practice, and evaluation of this supervisory method. That it has a great deal to offer is clear. That it is really offering a great deal seems to be unclear.

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## CHAPTER 6

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# The Place of Staff Meetings in Instructional Improvement

If supervision is a cooperative enterprise wherein each staff member contributes appropriately to the improvement of instruction, a setting where cooperative behavior can occur or at least can be encouraged must be provided. Certainly the staff meeting suggests itself as a means of providing this setting.

However, it must be emphasized that cooperative action and behavior, although interesting and even pleasurable,

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ings, and supervisory meetings.<sup>1</sup> Although there are elements of each type in any staff meeting, such a classification is useful because it indicates that a staff meeting should bear a particular emphasis. Therefore, while this discussion will emphasize the supervisory meeting, elements of the other types of meetings will be considered in their appropriate relationships to supervision.

The major purpose of supervisory meetings is to aid in the improvement of instruction. This says all and yet says nothing, for there are other specific purposes that must be accomplished if advancement is to be made toward the overall goal. Therefore supervisory staff meetings should have the following subsidiary purposes:

1. To aid in the identification of instructional problems.
2. To formulate ways of dealing with instructional problems.
3. To develop more dramatic and creative approaches to instruction.
4. To pool the ideas and strengths of the staff.
5. To develop an increased sense of "all-school" or "all-district" feeling.
6. To evaluate certain elements of the supervisory program.
7. To plan next steps on the basis of evaluation.

Of course many other purposes might be cited for staff meetings, but, in terms of the supervisory process, the above list seems to be most relevant.<sup>2</sup>

### *To Aid in the Identification of Instructional Problems*

Instructional problems are identified in many ways. They can be identified by means of classroom observation, an examination of test data, a teacher's analysis of the day-to-day

<sup>1</sup> George C. Kyte, *The Principal at Work*, Ginn & Company, Boston, 1952, p. 288.

<sup>2</sup> The reader who has an interest in purposes for staff meetings other than those listed above will be helped by the suggestions of Thomas H. Briggs and Joseph Justman, *Improving Instruction Through Supervision*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1956. Chapter XIV.

must be relevant to something other than extending these activities for their own sakes. The relevance is to be found in the supervisory program and not in the activities designed to "further group processes." One has a purpose and meaning; the other represents a formulation of means to an end not clearly identified, except a sharper refinement of those means. Certainly one should not attempt to denigrate group problem-solving approaches, but one should show a little hostility when such approaches are not problem-centered, when there is more concern about "how" something is done rather than what is done.

In this vein staff meetings have a crucial role to play, for they can focus on what needs to be accomplished and then determine the best solution. This solution may or may not involve group activity in the usual meaning of the term. The means of solving a problem must be determined by the nature of the problem itself.

Of course the determination of a course of action at a faculty meeting, whether it involves group activity or not, is still a group decision, and it appears that superior supervisors involve others in the decision-making process. There are no other settings in which so broad a base of faculty involvement in decision-making is possible with so little effort.

It is in this sense that staff meetings are essential to the success of a supervisory program. There is no better way to bring to bear the various strengths represented by individual staff members on a given problem simultaneously. Indeed it is difficult to imagine any kind of a supervisory program in which staff meetings play no part.

## PURPOSES OF STAFF MEETINGS

There are generally three types of staff meetings. These are described by Kyte as social meetings, administrative meet-

ings, and supervisory meetings.<sup>1</sup> Although there are elements of each type in any staff meeting, such a classification is useful because it indicates that a staff meeting should bear a particular emphasis. Therefore, while this discussion will emphasize the supervisory meeting, elements of the other types of meetings will be considered in their appropriate relationships to supervision.

The major purpose of supervisory meetings is to aid in the improvement of instruction. This says all and yet says nothing, for there are other specific purposes that must be accomplished if advancement is to be made toward the overall goal. Therefore supervisory staff meetings should have the following subsidiary purposes:

1. To aid in the identification of instructional problems.
2. To formulate ways of dealing with instructional problems.
3. To develop more dramatic and creative approaches to instruction.
4. To pool the ideas and strengths of the staff.
5. To develop an increased sense of "all-school" or "all-district" feeling.
6. To evaluate certain elements of the supervisory program.
7. To plan next steps on the basis of evaluation.

Of course many other purposes might be cited for staff meetings, but, in terms of the supervisory process, the above list seems to be most relevant.<sup>2</sup>

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work in his class, or more subjective sources that impress themselves upon the individuals of a school staff. Identification of problems may also arise from an examination of curriculum prompted by external forces such as the current interest in science and mathematics. Whatever the source of the original identification, it is usually tentative and subject to confirmation.

Among the means at hand to probe more deeply into a suspected instructional weakness is the pool of judgments which can be offered by the professional staff. Because of their day-by-day experience in the classroom, the teachers are aware of their own instructional problems, but they may not be aware that these problems are also shared by others. However, a staff discussion can usually indicate matters of widespread concern and distinguish them from problems that concern only a few teachers. In a very real sense the staff meeting can be one of the earliest steps in the supervisory program.

### *To Formulate Ways of Dealing with Instructional Problems*

This purpose for staff meetings is important for at least two reasons. First, if a staff is plagued by pervading and persistent problems dealing with instruction, it is clearly the supervisor's responsibility to extend the leadership that will help solve the problems. A failure to respond to this kind of a situation is one of the very best ways to develop a cynical, apathetic, and lackluster staff.

The matter of staff morale, although important, is really subordinate to a second compelling reason for dealing promptly and expeditiously with instructional problems. While the learning difficulty remains unsolved, the children in the school are not receiving the education they deserve. It is, of course, a primary responsibility to present the very best possible program at all times to all children. This responsibility is inescapable.



The concept presented here is that there may be a danger in getting caught up with an emphasis on complex matters before the prerequisites have been met. There is a tendency to do a great deal of talking about "breaking lock steps" and "going beyond the basics" when there is no assurance that some instructional routines are bad or that the basics beyond which children are expected to soar have even been reached.

There must be attention to building instructional programs that are imaginative, creative, and forward-looking. But in the process of building there must also be a rigorous attention to maintenance. Thus, while there must be applause for the more dramatic innovations in education, there must also be applause for those who see the need for the more colorless yet equally dramatic emphasis on the teaching chores designed to keep the program fundamentally sound. When this soundness is threatened by the development of instructional problems in, say, the reading program, the most imaginative, the most creative, and the most dramatic course of action is to deal with those problems promptly and effectively.

A well-planned series of staff meetings can contribute enormously to the formulation of plans to deal with emergency instructional problems. Assuming that the problems have been correctly identified, the next logical step is to formulate courses of action that will deal with them. Mutual planning, pooling of information and evidence, and the presentation of alternative courses of action are just a few of the activities that can engage the time and energy of a staff in meetings designed to formulate steps in dealing with instructional deficiencies.

### *To Develop More Dramatic and Creative Approaches to Learning*

Previous paragraphs have emphasized the need for dealing with instructional problems. In a sense this may be thought of as the "remedial" aspect of supervision. To deal only with

this aspect of instructional improvement, however, is to fall short of the purposes of supervision. It is no exaggeration to say that a good supervisory program is not satisfied with excellence and must continually try to achieve imaginative and successful approaches to learning.

It is unfortunate that this purpose for staff meetings is often not considered. It may be that a great deal remains to be learned about creativity, but enough is now known through the efforts of Getzels, Torrance, and others so that a great deal can be done to formulate approaches to teaching and learning that are more likely to be truly creative than much of the slipshod and aimless work that now passes for creativity.

During a series of staff meetings faculty groups can deal with real problems related to imagination and creativity. For example, Getzels<sup>3</sup> and Jackson and Torrance<sup>4</sup> have found that in a typical class, the most creative youngsters are least likely to be found in the top 25 per cent of the class. The educational implications of this distribution of creativity deserve most serious attention. Torrance<sup>5</sup> also reveals a phenomenon which he terms the "fourth grade slump." This slump is marked by a drop-off of creativity among children in the fourth grade. It apparently happens too frequently to be due to chance among children in schools of the United States. Surely school faculties who are sensitive to developing creative approaches to problem-solving should be deeply concerned with this phenomenon.

The distribution of creative ability among children and

<sup>3</sup> W. Getzels and P. W. Jackson, "The Meaning of Giftedness, An Examination of an Expanding Concept," *Phi Delta Kappan*, Vol. 40, 1958, pp. 75-77.

<sup>4</sup> E. Paul Torrance, "Explorations in Creative Thinking in the Early School Years: VI. Highly Intelligent and Highly Creative Children in a Laboratory School," Research Memorandum B.E.R. 59-7, Bureau of Educational Research, University of Minnesota, June, 1959.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Torrance, *Guiding Creative Development*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1962, pp. 93-94.

the regression of this ability at certain grade levels are only two problems that can serve as a fruitful basis of solid work by a school staff. Others are techniques of identifying creative children, developing creativity through appropriate learning situations, and evaluation of creativity through appropriate means. Only in a relatively few locations is serious work being done on this problem. It deserves far more attention, and surely much of the planning for this kind of work can and must be done in staff meetings.

### *To Pool the Ideas and Strengths of the Staff*

This purpose of staff meetings is probably most often met incidentally during discussions before and after the meeting itself. What is wanted is a deliberate commitment to the purpose of pooling ideas and strengths. It might be useful to set a series of meetings with the avowed objective of sharing ideas about some phase of the supervisory program. In this regard the tendency to "brainstorm" should be avoided. While some good may come from freewheeling ideas, a more orderly approach is likely to yield better results. This more orderly approach is best characterized by systematic presentations by those who have made adequate preparation. Careful preparation enables a staff member who has a deep interest in a particular subject-matter area to disseminate his knowledge among his colleagues about his field of interest while at the same time he is able to extend his own knowledge.

The practice of orderly presentation of ideas by those most competent to deal with them is neither new nor unique but it is sometimes neglected. For example, a great deal is often made of the desirability of rotating chairmen at faculty meetings. Advocates of this practice usually claim that it is an extension of democratic practices. It is doubtful that this reasoning is meritorious. The reason for rotating the leadership of staff meetings is so that the leader can contribute something other than a tentative knowledge of the Roberts'

**Rules of Order.** To give teachers the form of leadership without the substance is sham. Substance is provided by presenting the opportunity for solid contributions on the part of the teacher who leads the staff meeting. This contribution should ideally be in form of ideas and knowledge, thoroughly prepared, which lead to instructional improvement.

### *To Develop an All-School Spirit*

Elementary school teachers tend to be individualists. A strict self-contained classroom organization unfortunately aggravates this condition. Often the very language of the teacher lays bare this flaw. "My children," "my class," "my unit" are some of the terms which in themselves are not objectionable but which betray a tendency to think in terms of a single class rather than the school as a whole. It is, of course, desirable that a teacher identify himself with his class, but it is undesirable when such identification assumes preeminence.

By their very nature staff meetings can do a great deal to not only mitigate this condition but also to build positive attitudes about the school as a whole. The supervisor's obligation in this setting is to stress the importance of the work of each to a total outcome rather than a more atomistic stress on the work of individuals in a discrete fashion. Thus the quality of the school's program must not be subordinated to the work of individual grades or teachers. The problem here is one of goals, and the danger here is that the goals are likely to be centered around what should be accomplished in the individual teacher's classes without reference as to how these goals can be amalgamated into instructional goals for the school. Supervisors must continually strive to keep the work of the staff in harmony with the instructional goals of the school. Staff meetings which serve to keep these objectives in the forefront of staff members' thinking are eminently useful in this regard. However mere exhortation, while effective in the

short run, soon begins to pale with repetition. How much more effective an approach, although perhaps less inspirational, is the constant appraisal of the day-to-day activities in terms of the overarching goals of the school. As staff members begin to perceive that their work is important only in relation to the school program, they begin to expand their aspirations beyond what they themselves wish to do, and they begin to identify positively and sometimes eagerly with the work of others. Their triumphs are shared and their failures become challenges. Rivalries and jealousies that so often mar the perfection of cohesive teamwork diminish if they do not disappear altogether. Thus staff meetings by directly approaching the matter of staff unification can contribute enormously to the ongoing supervisory program of the school.

### *To Evaluate Certain Elements of the Supervisory Program*

This purpose for staff meetings may be regarded as a corollary to the purpose immediately preceding. If instructional improvement is an all-school concern, certain aspects of evaluation inevitably become an all-school concern. At this point no attempt is made to treat the problem of evaluation as such. This is left to a later section. However, it is appropriate at this point to emphasize that one of the purposes of staff meetings is to bring to bear evaluations of staff on the instructional program. These evaluations may be highly informal, but it is to be hoped that the collective evaluations will be made on the basis of data and information which are gathered systematically. One of the basic tenets of evaluation is that it be continuous. Certainly one means of applying evaluative techniques is provided by the staff meeting wherein the appropriate data can be presented, interpreted, discussed, and acted upon. While such practices are a far cry from the total evaluative procedure, it is an important aspect of it.

be remembered is that preplanning for staff meetings should not be confined to the supervisor. It is difficult if not impossible to elicit any helpful suggestions or discussion from people who are in a very real sense taken by surprise by the content of the meeting. Without the circulation of a prepared agenda, contributions that are made are not likely to result from considered reflection.

### *Backgrounding the Meeting*

Another important phase of planning for the staff meeting is a thorough preparation with regard to the background of the problems to be considered. An important part of the preparatory work is the work-up of the problems so that their significance will be recognized by those who must come to grips with them. This practice has the salutary effect of selecting only those problems which have significance and eliminating educational trivia from consideration.

In order to present a background of significance for a given problem, the supervisor must spend time and effort in assembling the appropriate information. Although many staff meetings purport to be democratic, a common complaint voiced by teachers is that they are expected to accept the problems that supervisors deem important. At times announcement of such problems comes as a distinct surprise, not to say shock, to teachers who do not see the same significance as the supervisor does and perhaps never will, because of the abrupt manner in which they are often introduced. It would appear that if, after a careful investigation of the problem and a well-constructed exegesis to the faculty, the teachers remain indifferent to it, it is not actually much of a problem. Even if it is, success in dealing with it is probably a remote contingency in the face of faculty apathy.

One way to insure the inclusion of only relevant matters in staff meetings is to share the agenda building with the staff. This can be simply handled by requesting items for the

agenda, or it can range to a more elaborate structure of having a duly constituted committee to screen matters which are to come before the staff. No matter how this responsibility is shared, someone must be ready to interpret the significance of agenda items.

Another matter that deserves serious attention in planning staff meetings might be termed mechanical aspects. These aspects would include the time, place, and length of the meeting together with such other considerations as seating arrangements, lighting, and ventilation.

Perhaps the most stubborn of these problems relates to the time of the meeting. Of course the time of the meeting has a heavy influence upon the length of the meeting. For example, meetings held before school can scarcely be called "open ended"; when the bell rings, the meeting must end.

There are relatively few choices for meeting times. These are before-school meetings, noon-hour meetings, after-school meetings, meetings on school time, and "holiday" meetings, which, in keeping with present thinking, include Saturdays. Each of these meeting times has advantages and disadvantages, and on the whole none is completely satisfactory. Before-school meetings are advantageous in that the staff is likely to be fresh and not in need of refreshment that is considered necessary in meetings held later in the day and which cuts so sharply into the time available for the business at hand. Because the meetings must end at a specific time, it may also be argued that meetings may be handled more expeditiously.

These advantages scarcely bear close examination in relation to their disadvantages. Before-school meetings are usually short, sometimes too short. In addition, children arrive at the school while the meeting is in progress, and their presence, although perhaps unseen, is not unheard. This of course constitutes a distraction by contributing to a general uneasiness. Another disadvantage of before-school meetings is that teachers ordinarily spend time before the opening session in putting the finishing touches on their plans, administering

individual help, conferring with parents and other teachers, and, in general, taking care of the countless details that are a part of teaching. A common rejoinder to this recitation of disadvantages is that these meetings occur at most once a week, and, if they are scheduled properly, many of these problems can be anticipated by the teachers and therefore planned for at other times. This argument has merit, but the fact remains that a before-school meeting rarely permits the leisurely reflection which so many instructional problems demand.

Many of the same objections can be raised for the noon-hour meeting. Time is sharply limited by the onset of the afternoon session. There are noon-hour obligations that must be met by teachers, particularly in schools where children are transported. When noon-hour meetings are held over lunch, a most deplorable and distractive note is introduced by the rattle of lunch bags, the stir created by coffee pourers, and exclamations of disgust borne from yet another peanut butter sandwich. Conducting any sort of a businesslike meeting under such conditions is, to put it charitably, impossible. The alternative is, of course, to wait until everyone has finished his lunch, with the unhappy consequence of having insufficient time to read the agenda, much less act upon it.

There are staffs that claim that noon-hour meetings are *preferable to before-school or after-school meetings*. Certainly they are more convenient to many, particularly to those who regard after-school hours as their own time. However, convenience must not be equated with quality.

Another advantage often cited for noon-hour meetings is that there is a friendly feeling of camaraderie engendered by the breaking of bread together. An expression of this point of view leaves one with the unhappy conclusion that meetings held at other times tend to degenerate into a state of nature *where snarling and biting are the hallmarks*. Of course this is nonsense. If staff members are dyspeptic during an after-school meeting and grouchy during a before-school meeting, they are certain to exhibit some type of postprandial distress



during a noon-hour meeting. The problem is not so much a matter of time as it is personality. If a staff can work together at all, it can do so at any time.

The after-school meeting is viewed with some misgivings by teachers because of an unfortunate tendency to prolong these beyond reason. The expense of time which lies ahead at the end of a school day is deceiving and sometimes results in a meeting marked by waywardness. The obvious remedy is to set a time limit for meetings of perhaps an hour which can be exceeded only under unusual circumstances. Of course these unusual circumstances are open to broad interpretation and, perhaps for some supervisors, trivial circumstances would qualify. Yet the imposition of a time limit for after-school meetings does much to reassure teachers that they will not be kept for an unreasonable length of time except for matters of grave importance.

After-school meetings are advantageous for a number of reasons. The children are not on the premises. The meeting can proceed at a more leisurely, reflective pace because of the increased time available. In addition, resource people from outside the faculty probably will find an after-school hour more convenient than a preschool or noon-hour meeting.

There is yet another matter that deserves comment regarding after-school meetings. There is a tendency to regard after-school hours as overtime by some teachers. Indeed some school officials have had to disabuse staff members of this notion by passing regulations that have the effect of keeping teachers in the schools until a certain time in the afternoon. Needless to say, it is unfortunate that such restrictions must be imposed, for they certainly detract from the professional spirit that one likes to attribute to teaching. It has an added effect of being somewhat of an insult to the conscientious teacher who needs no such extraneous motivation to do what he would do any way.

The point is that time after school simply cannot be regarded as free time in the usual sense. Supervisors need not

apologize for holding after-school meetings because some teachers may regard them as impositions.

Perhaps the best time for staff meetings is during school hours. All of the advantages for after-school meetings are preserved and even enhanced. Early dismissal of children makes possible a block of time which is unattainable through other means. The disadvantage of meetings on school time stems from the fact that children lose time from an already restricted instructional schedule. While we might say with some justice that time spent in staff meetings on school time will have a long-range effect on instructional improvement, most schools find it impossible to make a wholesale commitment to this plan. However, in view of the advantages this plan presents, its moderate use should be encouraged.

### *Place of the Staff Meeting*

How much the location or surroundings affect the quality of staff meetings is open to some question. Certainly logical analysis would lead to certain conclusions about lighting, ventilation, and general comfort. If school officials were to emulate certain business enterprises, a conference room would loom large in their thinking. Many school staffs meet in rooms singularly unsuited for such occasions. Among these is the teachers' lounge. There should be a semblance of a businesslike atmosphere at a staff meeting which may be discouraged by the arrangement of a lounge. In addition, the room used for staff meetings should make provision for note-taking. Of course it is possible to take notes under almost any conditions, but optimum conditions should be provided wherever possible.

Classrooms are sometimes used for staff meetings. The problem here is that elementary school desks and chairs are not well suited to the dimensions of adults. If this were not so, the classroom would be a rather good meeting place. It tends to be large, airy, and well lighted. Its atmosphere is less

casual than a teachers' lounge and yet informal enough so that it is not oppressive. Yet, with all of these advantages, it is uncomfortable and therefore is not well suited for adult meetings.

Most elementary schools do not have a really good room for staff meetings. Certainly one would hesitate to set aside an appropriate space for the exclusive use of staff meetings. It would be used far too infrequently to warrant the expense. All one can really do is to find the room in the building that will lend itself best to staff meetings and make whatever adaptations are necessary. Perhaps the room that most often lends itself to this purpose is the school library, although this is far from ideal.

### *Conduct of the Supervisor During the Meeting*

To separate a supervisor's conduct during a staff meeting from all other aspects of supervisory behavior is, of course, impossible. Yet in order to clarify certain behavioral aspects of staff meetings the attempt must be made.

The attribute most desired in a supervisor during a meeting is restraint. This attribute is also mentioned very little. The tendency to talk at great length, the urge to present one's views, the temptation to vault from premise to conclusion with little or no intervening discussion preclude the fulfillment of the purposes of the meeting, whatever they may be.

Another desirable characteristic of a supervisor's behavior during a meeting is tolerance. Some would prefer the word *acceptant*, but there are at times views expressed which can only be tolerated, and not accepted at all. Although tolerance can be an extremely cruel word, carrying with it overtones of amusement, superiority, and general boorishness, it is not used here in this sense at all. It simply means that there can be no such thing as a stupid question or remark from sincere people striving for excellence. When a question or remark arises that is off the mark, it ought to be regarded as what it

probably is—an attempt to move ahead. If it cannot be accepted, it at least can be received with good will or, in another word, tolerance. One need not recite the melancholy tales of teachers whose attempts to contribute to meetings were received with scorn, or worse, amusement. No one needs to defend tolerance. What is astonishing is that there are so many instances of intolerance in the special sense of the word as it is used here.

The conduct of a supervisor during the meeting should also be characterized by adaptability. This word implies more than a lack of rigidity. It implies, rather, an active testing of one's position against the points of view and reasoning powers of others. If a supervisor's position is found wanting, it follows that it should be changed. This may appear to be rather obvious. However, there are times when a supervisory position is frozen fast and cannot be thawed even by the warmth engendered by sweet reasonableness.<sup>6</sup>

Actually the supervisor should be seeking reasons why his position is untenable rather than attempt to woo others to his points of view. In other words he should ask for reasons why a certain plan or project *will not* work, and from this rather negative approach, refute arguments as they arise. If he cannot refute these counterarguments, he must change his own points of view.

Such behavior is difficult, for everyone has his preconceived notions and prejudices. These biases sometimes die painfully, but, if there is a contemporaneous birth of a new or different approach, all is not lost. Only by judicious adaptation is progress possible.

In addition to the types of conduct mentioned above, supervisors must also exhibit characteristics that reflect sound

<sup>6</sup> Over the years this writer has been gathering information about the strengths and weaknesses of staff meetings as perceived by teachers. High on the list of irritations is the meeting characterized by a sham discussion about matters already decided beforehand. Although the discussions against certain decisions are eminently sensible, at least in the minds of the majority of the discussants, no changes result.

## STAFF MEETINGS AS A FACTOR OF MORALE

An individual's morale is affected, in part, by what happens to him. Unfortunately, for many teachers, staff meetings happen to them.<sup>8</sup> Wiles indicates that staff meetings present opportunities for wholesome interaction of staff personnel, for cooperative thinking, for staff planning, for getting to know the total school, and for the interchange of ideas.<sup>9</sup> When staff meetings fall short of these goals, one cannot expect morale to soar.

In general the evidence indicates that, when staff meetings result in solid accomplishment, teacher attitudes toward them are strongly positive. The converse is of course true.

Suggestions for improving staff morale which are made by Wiles,<sup>10</sup> and Spain, Drummond, and Goodlad,<sup>11</sup> among others, can be followed with success within the framework of the staff meeting. For example, if it is important that supervisors "plan with the staff any changes that are made" or "if you have to act prior to a staff discussion, be sure to explain your action at the first opportunity and seek discussion of the action,"<sup>12</sup> then clearly a staff meeting is indicated.

An interesting study by Barthol points up the conditions she found in faculty meetings which contribute to good teacher morale.<sup>13</sup> The number in parentheses indicates the

<sup>8</sup> K. A. Cook and Harold Full, "Is the School Faculty Meeting Significant in Promoting Professional Growth?" *School Review*, March, 1952, pp. 142-150.

<sup>9</sup> Kimball Wiles, *Supervision for Better Schools*, Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1950, p. 150.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 174-176.

<sup>11</sup> Charles R. Spain, Harold D. Drummond, and John I. Goodlad, *Educational Leadership and the Elementary School Principals*, Rinehart & Company, New York, 1956, p. 94.

percentage of teachers who regarded each item as contributory to morale.

1. Teacher participation in forming policies concerning faculty meetings (94.0).
2. Easy yet businesslike and orderly atmosphere in the faculty meetings (85.2).
3. Efforts by principals to see that all who have questions or comments in faculty meetings are recognized and that their questions are referred to the proper source in the group for answers (84.6).
4. Effective use in school programs of conclusions or solutions reached in faculty meetings (83.0).
5. Encouragement of principals for staff meetings to accept comments and ideas of all members as worthy of consideration (80.8).
6. Use of comfortable and large enough rooms for faculty meetings (80.2).
7. Complete freedom for interchange of ideas in faculty meetings (79.7).
8. Faculty meetings organized around teachers' problems (79.1).
9. Democratic atmospheres in faculty meetings (78.6).
10. Consideration of the comfort of staff members at faculty meetings (78.6).
11. Faculty meetings centered around topics of teacher importance (78.0).
12. Effective faculty meeting planning committees (77.5).
13. Efforts on the parts of principals to keep a few persons from dominating faculty meetings (76.9).
14. Improvement of staff quality and school program through faculty meetings (74.7).
15. Agendas or definite plans for faculty meetings (74.2).
16. Consideration of important topics first in faculty meetings (72.6).
17. Opportunities to listen to talks by resource people in faculty meetings (67.6).
18. Flexible furniture arrangements in rooms used for faculty meetings (67.0).
19. Completion of faculty meetings with feelings of accomplishment by all (63.2).
20. Effective solution of teachers' problems in faculty meetings (62.6).
21. Faculty meetings held during school time (57.7).

22. Allowance of time for evaluation of progress made at faculty meetings (53.3).
23. Availability of agendas for faculty meetings prior to the meetings (51.7).
24. Time given to faculty meetings used to best advantage (51.6).

It is safe to assume that the converse of each of these conditions, when present in a staff meeting, would tend to detract from morale. In addition to the converse of the above twenty-four mentioned conditions, Barthol also found that there are certain conditions which do not contribute to good teacher morale when they are present as a part of a faculty meeting. These are:

1. Feelings among staff members that certain decisions were made at faculty meetings which were not in accord with the feelings of the majority of the members (69.8).
2. Feelings of patient waiting on the part of staff members for faculty meetings to end so that they may return to other matters (67.6).
3. Feelings of little or nothing accomplished in group discussions at faculty meetings (64.3).
4. Interruption of principal of discussions in faculty meetings with unsatisfactory contributions or decisions (57.7).
5. Freer discussion of faculty meeting topics by staff members after the meetings are over (53.9).

In order to improve faculty morale through staff meetings, Barthol's data suggest the following conditions ought to be given attention:

1. Greater teacher participation in forming the policies concerning the faculty meetings.
2. Organization of faculty meetings around topics of teacher importance and teachers' problems and effective solutions sought for these problems at the meetings.
3. Agendas or definite plans for faculty meetings and availability of these agendas to the staff prior to the meetings.
4. Effective faculty planning committees.
5. Faculty meetings held during school time.
6. Use of room for faculty meetings that are comfortable and large enough with flexible furniture arrangements for small group discussions.

7. Consideration of the comfort of individual staff members at faculty meetings such as provisions for ash trays, refreshments, etc.
8. Atmospheres in faculty meetings which are democratic, easy yet businesslike and orderly.
9. Efforts by principals to see that a few persons do not dominate faculty meetings, that all comments and ideas are accepted as worthy of consideration, and that all who have questions are recognized and assisted.
10. Opportunities to listen to talks by resource people at faculty meetings.
11. Proper allowance of time in faculty meetings so that important topics may be taken up first and time may still be available for evaluation of progress made in the meetings.
12. Complete freedom for interchange of ideas in faculty meetings.
13. Effective use in the school program of conclusions or solutions reached in faculty meetings in order to bring about an improvement in the quality of the staff and the school program through these meetings.
14. Completion of faculty meetings with a feeling of accomplishment by all.

A study by Cook and Full relates indirectly to this relationship between staff meetings and morale.<sup>14</sup> The intent of these investigators was to assess the impact of faculty meetings on improvement of instruction. However, the aspects of such meetings have meaning when viewed in the context of morale. Five standards that ought to characterize good staff meetings were selected. These standards are described as follows:

1. Concerned with teachers' professional needs and focused on problems in the immediate school environment.
2. Must be concerned with broad development and, at the same time, provide for professional needs of all teachers.
3. Must be well planned.
4. Growth results from meetings for which teachers have made careful preparation.
5. Teachers encouraged to participate in meetings.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> K. A. Cook and Harold Full, *loc. cit.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.



In order to determine how well these standards were being met, Cook and Full surveyed teachers who represented 240 schools in the state of West Virginia. Results of the survey scarcely can be termed encouraging. The results for the first standard, concern with professional needs in the immediate school environment, indicate that in only 14 per cent of the schools were broad educational aims studied. In only 23 per cent of the schools' staff meetings was teacher participation a characteristic in planning. Most of the schools (48 per cent) were concerned with studies of subject matter.

If faculty meetings are devoted largely to a discussion of subject matter aims and objectives that are not particularly related to the instructional needs of teachers and if teachers do not participate to any great degree in formulating the problems in terms of their own needs, it is not easy to understand how even the most promising teachers can receive a high degree of professional stimulation. Nowhere within the scope of the data is there strong positive evidence that significant needs of the teachers are given attention in planning faculty meetings.<sup>16</sup>

For the second standard, concern with broad developments and provision for professional needs of all teachers, Cook and Full found that in 37 per cent of the schools the problem studied concerned discipline; in 8 per cent of the schools the problem studied concerned significant developments in education; in 10 per cent of the schools the problems studied at staff meetings concerned discipline as a fundamental in teaching and learning. It would appear that those who planned these faculty meetings failed to recognize the training, experience, abilities, interests, needs, and attitudes of the teachers. If such recognition were indeed evident, this evidence would take the form of a greater concern with a broader array of problems than was uncovered by Cook and Full.

For the planning of faculty meetings, Cook and Full found that in 70 per cent of the schools notices of meetings

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

were given one week or less in advance. This finding is further sharpened by the fact that 43 per cent of the schools' teachers received notice of the meetings not more than one day in advance of the meetings, and in 21 per cent of the schools notices of the meetings were given on the day of the meeting. In addition to this the principal in 58 per cent of these schools made all the plans for the meetings, and in only 10 per cent of the schools was there cooperative planning. From these results it can be gathered then that in the majority of the schools studied there was insufficient notice given with regard to the meeting. In over half the schools studied the planning was in the hands of one person.

These findings, of course, are related to the fourth standard which relates to the preparation that teachers make for the staff meeting. In 63 per cent of the schools it was indicated that teachers spend thirty minutes or less in preparing for a faculty meeting. This is not surprising in view of the evidence that indicates that they receive very little notice of the meeting. Indeed, of the 63 per cent who indicated that they spent thirty minutes or less in preparation, 59 per cent of the same group indicated that the time spent in preparing for meetings is perhaps more nearly zero than thirty minutes.

The last standard indicates that teachers participate in meetings in 61 per cent of the schools by the informal discussion method and in only 21 per cent of the schools is discussion chiefly by the principal. This presents a somewhat more positive picture. However, the study by Cook and Full indicates that these practices fall short of desirable standards by a considerable margin.

The implications of Cook and Full's study with respect to morale factors are clear. Here is a picture of typical practice in faculty meetings wherein the problems studied and discussed are rather narrow, and wherein there is insufficient notice of meetings, which results in almost no preparation

the work of a professional staff aggressively attacking its problems. While no direct study of morale was made in this investigation, the inference is clear.

Arnold studied the problem of morale as influenced by participation in group planning and action.<sup>17</sup> One of the variables he studied was the faculty meeting. In order to judge each item qualitatively, responses were given point values as follows: Very Often—5, Often—4, Sometimes—3, Seldom—2, Never—1. Using this technique Arnold found that teachers gave a mean rating of 3.6 to staff meetings while principals scored faculty meetings slightly higher with a mean rating of 3.8. No item was rated higher than 4.1 by the teachers (leader gives adequate explanation of matters that have been administratively decided), and the lowest rating was 2.6 (small discussion groups or "buzz sessions" are used to clarify a problem under discussion). A rating of 4 indicates a frequency of approximately 50 per cent according to Arnold. His data would seem to indicate that the teachers in his sample lacked a certain amount of enthusiasm for staff meetings. It is also interesting to note the close agreement with principals who, according to the data, do most of the planning for these meetings.

Again the relevance of staff meetings to morale is pointed up by this investigation. If it is true that morale is influenced by the success or failure of important activities, and if a staff meeting is in fact an important professional activity, one can only assume that morale is not enhanced by meetings which ignore to a large extent those things which are known to exert a desirable effect.

Of course one cannot generalize to the extent that all staff meetings are deadening and unproductive. Just as certain activities tend to depress morale, so will the converse of these activities improve it. The important consideration is

<sup>17</sup> Dwight L. Arnold, "Morale as Influenced by Participation in Group Planning and Action," *Educational Research Bulletin*, College of Education, Ohio State University, November 11, 1953, pp. 202-211.

that staff meetings, by achieving purposes perceived to be important by teachers, not only help to develop a sound improvement program, but also develop good attitudes about teaching and the profession. Thus good staff meetings set conditions which are reinforcing. As progress is made, incentives are provided to progress further.

### *Special Problems Related to Staff Meetings*

Surely not all the faults that are identified with faculty meetings are attributable to supervisors and principals. Teachers must bear some of the onus themselves. There are some characteristics that teachers manifest which can be described charitably as infuriating.

The first of these is the *talkative* teacher. No one really minds listening to others (unless he is pathologically egocentric) if what is being said is interesting and pertinent. However, there are staff members who by their incessant and irrelevant chatter bring to mind the old story of the caveman who said to his wife, "Now that we have learned to communicate, shut up!" Even though it was pointed out earlier that teachers should not be inhibited from contributing to a meeting, there is a limit, and this limit is characterized by relevance. The supervisor who does not discourage such behavior contributes to factors that tend to disenchant the majority of teachers, who justly feel that staff meetings are intended to solve problems and not serve as forums.

What can be done to discourage such conduct depends somewhat on the teacher. Usually, though not always, one who talks at great length around a periphery does not deliberately tend to obstruct and is often shocked when told that he is being slightly offensive. Often all that is needed is to introduce a new structure into the meeting which will permit the teacher to "see" the effect of too much talk. This structure is well known to those who work with group processes. It consists of having one or two observers who are asked to be

somewhat more concerned about the mechanics of the meeting than its content. Their task is to analyze the meeting from the standpoint of who contributes, how often each member contributes, and the relevance of the contribution. Toward the end of the meeting this analysis is presented and, hopefully, will prove instructive. To be sure, such a restructuring of a staff meeting produces a certain amount of artificiality, at least in its early stages. With time this tends to dissipate and also in time the need for such restructuring may become unnecessary.

Should the use of observers fail and should the debilitating effect of the random conversationalist continue, a more direct approach suggests itself. He who is in charge of a meeting can exert considerable control. One means of exerting such control is to ask directly for comments from others even though it is evident that the talkative teacher wishes to be heard. This is not an especially gentle procedure but it has its effect. Should the teacher in question be an "interrupter" as well as a "talker" it is clearly up to the supervisor to insist that all staff members be given a chance to contribute. If these procedures leave the talkative teacher unmoved, a conference may be in order. To permit such a condition to persist is to do a disservice to all, but particularly to the teacher who is unknowingly offending his colleagues.

A second problem is related to the teacher who is *out of field*. This refers to the teacher who engages in his own private conversation while the meeting is in progress or who makes side comments about the business of the meeting. These comments are usually in the form of wisecracks. Unlike the talkative teacher, the out-of-field teacher usually knows that his conduct is distracting, but does not care. The use of observer analyses may be helpful here but they cannot be counted upon. Usually the direct approach is more helpful. This may take the form of holding up the meeting until the teacher realizes that he is the object of silent attention. Or it may take the form of a question which can be answered only

This problem usually resolves itself into a conflict in goals. This teacher's goals may or may not be in harmony with the goals presented during the meeting. When they are, all is well. When they are not, they do not concern him. His behavior is more likely to be characterized by indifference or quiet resistance rather than hostility. Of all the problem types this is the most difficult to deal with. A search for causes may reveal that this teacher's behavior stems from insecurity ("I must do well") or from a competitive spirit ("I must be better") or it may stem from a lack of experience with a mutually helpful faculty. Whatever the reason, the attitude is not one to be encouraged. The solution lies in leading this teacher to accept the overarching goals of supervision to which his personal goals can contribute. This is not an easy task, but it may prove helpful in formulating goals that are pertinent not only to this teacher but to others as well. It was pointed out earlier that many objectives of supervision are stated in the form of good intentions which in fact may be unachievable. If a teacher examines such goals in the harsh light of reality and finds them deficient, a dialectic may be introduced which may in turn lead to a useful synthesis.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Of all supervisory procedures the staff meeting is the most widely used. The evidence indicates that it is a technique not always used well. Since staff meetings have a direct effect on instruction in part because they have an effect on morale, it is of crucial importance that time should be given to those matters which lead to positive attitudes about faculty meetings. It is within this context that items such as time and place of meetings, adequate notice of meetings, and proper supervisory conduct during the meeting assumes importance.

However, the importance of purpose and content of staff meetings is of primary significance. The staff meeting pre-

sents an opportunity for all the professional members of a staff to come to grips with instruction. To fail to use this opportunity to the maximum is to fail with one of the most effective supervisory aids at a school's disposal.

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## CHAPTER 7

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# In-Service Education and Instructional Improvement

One of the hallmarks of a true professional, whatever his profession, is a never-ceasing zeal to learn. Unfortunately, not all members of the various professions possess this zeal, and, regrettably, this includes members of all branches of the teaching profession. Because it is easy to become involved with the obviously necessary duties of teaching, administration, or supervision, keeping up with new developments in the field of education is wistfully regarded by some as a luxury. Those who maintain this concept soon find themselves holding firmly to the status quo for they have no basis



for growth. Decisions are made in terms of knowledge that is at best incomplete. Soon their schools lack the vitality and drive that characterize good schools everywhere.

What is needed is the realization that keeping up to date is not a luxury at all but one of the most compelling necessities. Because of this realization programs of in-service education have become more and more common in schools of the United States.

Because of the variety of activities that may be termed in-service education, there are a number of definitions. Among the most useful is that offered by Haas, who says: "Broadly conceived, in-service education includes all activities engaged in by the professional personnel during their service and designed to contribute to improvement on the job."<sup>1</sup> Two items of significance are explicit in this definition. One is that in-service education never stops "during their service." The second is that these programs "contribute to improvement on the job." Thus Haas asks nothing less than constant improvement throughout the career of an educator. It is a demanding but necessary definition and one with enormous implications.

## RELATIONSHIP OF IN-SERVICE EDUCATION TO THE SUPERVISORY PROGRAM

An in-service education program can *be* the supervisory program, but only if certain conditions are met. In an earlier section of this volume the characteristics of a good supervisory program were presented as follows:

1. A careful examination of the instructional program to determine areas most in need of improvement.

<sup>1</sup> C. Glenn Haas, "In-Service Education Today," National Society for the Study of Education, 56th Yearbook, Part I, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957, p. 13.

2. A set of objectives to guide the supervisory program.
3. Activities appropriate in terms of the objectives to improve the selected areas of instruction.
4. The formulation of evaluative criteria to determine the extent of improvement.

When these characteristics mark an in-service education program, a supervisory program emerges. While the supervisory program is an in-service program, not all in-service programs are supervisory. In-service education may be concerned with matters that are more administrative in nature, such as the use of cumulative folders, discipline or classroom management, or classification of pupils. Each of these matters bears upon instruction to be sure, but instruction is not the focus of attention in such in-service programs.

An in-service education program directed at improving instruction must provide activities and experiences that are in harmony with the objectives of the program. In this sense in-service education must be regarded as a teaching situation and, because of those involved, a teaching situation of the very highest order. Because a supervisory program is, in fact, an in-service program, the planning, activities, and evaluation will be generally the same for each. In this light the comments made about the supervisory program in Chapter III will also serve for the in-service education program.

In most cases the objectives of an in-service program will reflect a given need. It is improbable that exactly the same needs will be reflected by different schools. Even when a general need is manifested by more than one school, such as reading improvement, this need is likely to differ sufficiently in detail from school to school to warrant differing approaches. The differences can usually be attributed to variability in teacher background and experience, in the quality of supervisory leadership, in community support and resources, in student population, and in incentives, motivations, work habits, and industry.

Because of these variabilities it is not strange that the

program itself. Thus attendance at a professional meeting which has a theme different from the in-service program is not to be discouraged, but by the same token should not be confused with the program.

## EXAMPLES OF IN-SERVICE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

There are of course excellent examples of in-service programs. In those presented here to illustrate good practice, one notices diversity in intent but a similarity in that each is specific with regard to its own purposes.

The first of these illustrations describes a program designed to help teachers to deal with reading problems.<sup>2</sup> In 1950 a reading center was established by the Dearborn, Michigan, public schools to furnish in-service education for elementary school teachers who wished to gain additional insight and experience in the problems of remedial reading. Training was also offered in the techniques of preparing remedial reading instructional materials for use with disabled readers in their classrooms. The teachers who have worked in the reading center have returned to their classrooms where they were able to teach children by adapting reading center materials and methods to class use. The teachers' experience in the center enabled them to deal more effectively with the individual reading problems of children.

Broadhead describes the operation of center as follows:

Every six weeks five teachers from different elementary schools come to the reading center for full time work while substitute teachers take over the work of their classrooms. The teachers are selected on the basis of their interest in participating in the program, the need for trained teachers in a particular school, and the effort to serve both upper and lower grade teachers equally.

<sup>2</sup> Clare A. Broadhead, "The Reading Center: An In-Service Training Program," *The Elementary School Journal*, February, 1952, pp. 335-339.

the teaching staff appeared to need help with the use of visual aids, the in-service education program was built around the following objectives:

1. To change the basic attitudes of most teachers that audio-visual aids are poor substitutes for teaching, to an attitude of appreciation of the program as an excellent and highly desirable type of teaching.
2. To acquaint teachers with the operation of all equipment in the school and the possibility of acquiring new equipment.
3. To acquaint teachers with the approaches and variety of uses of audio-visual aids.
4. To create in the teachers a sincere desire for experimentation with other types of teaching.
5. To exchange existing ideas about audio-visual aids and their uses within the school.
6. To stabilize and unify general policies concerning the use of audio-visual aids within the school.

This program utilized the talents of the teaching staff almost exclusively. It was found that each of the teachers had a particular fondness for a certain type of visual aid. In most cases this interest had been developed to a rather high degree but had resulted in neglect of other types of visual aids.

"If each expert could give her experience and knowledge to others," reasoned the principal, "she would be doing something worthwhile and getting recognition for it at the same time."<sup>6</sup> Thus a series of meetings was arranged over a six-month period. At each of these meetings three teachers presented their "specialities." Each talk was followed by a discussion, questions, and suggestions. While no quantitative evaluation of the program was made, the authors indicated certain changes were made by teachers in their use of audio-visual aids. A bulletin board and exhibits improved remarkably. Films were no longer shown to large groups of children in the auditorium.

"Summed up the effects of the program can be stated as follows: (1) broader understanding and greater use of audio-

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

Children who are accepted for work at the reading center have intelligence quotients of 90 or over and are two years or more retarded in reading grade level.

Each child comes to the center as long as help is needed. The fact that the pupils work with new teachers every six weeks does not interfere seriously with the children's progress. A degree of continuity is assured by the fact that, during the last two days of each six weeks period, the incoming group of five teachers works with the outgoing group, observing the work in progress and discussing during the afternoons the children's problems and the techniques being used. They then take over on the first day of the six-week term with confidence and understanding, and this is reflected in the continuing progress which the children usually make.

Approximately half the time in the afternoon is devoted to the preparation of materials which the teachers take back to their classrooms. It is not unusual for a teacher to individualize as many as a dozen books ranging from primer through fourth grade level. Thus the teacher is equipped to provide suitable story and study skills materials for each pupil in his class who needs specific help.

In the process of developing these materials the teacher learns a variety of ways of preparing comprehension checks, written and oral phonetic drills, and other practice materials—always in need for a particular purpose or to meet the needs of a particular child.

To date there are no objective data with regard to the carry-over to classroom teaching, but observation and conversations with teachers and principals indicate that the teachers who have had the reading center training have a better understanding of children in general and of what constitutes an individual reading problem in particular and that they have the materials and techniques they need in order to meet more adequately the individual needs of the children in their own classrooms.<sup>3</sup>

Another in-service program which illustrates a more formal approach is described by Leone and Lapone.<sup>4</sup> Because

<sup>3</sup> Broadhead, *op. cit.*, pp. 335-339.

<sup>4</sup> Olga C. Leone and O. J. Lapone, "An In-Service Project Develops a Visual Aids Program," *Elementary School Journal*, November, 1951, pp. 145-152.

staffs; organized the study groups in each school; and provided each staff with materials, bibliographies and suggested procedures. Participation in the program was put firmly on a voluntary basis with none of the six administrators taking any active part in organizing the staffs or in enlisting the cooperation of staff members.

Leaders of the discussion groups in the schools using anecdotal records were selected by their fellow staff members. The group leaders met with the writer for two extended sessions devoted to a thorough discussion of the content and procedure in the anecdotal program as outlined in the group leaders' manual.

Staffs of the schools, in which teachers read discussed textual materials, were furnished with bibliographies and with nine suggested topics dealing with several areas of child growth and development. The entire staff of each of this group of schools was to participate in the reading and discussion, and the leadership for the monthly meetings was arranged to rotate among the members of each staff according to the interest shown on particular topics.

After the organization by the writer at the beginning of the school year all these programs were self-directed. None received any consultant services, and all operated for only one school year.<sup>9</sup>

In summarizing this study the results indicate that self-directed child study produced in the time allowed only a few changes in teachers' attitudes toward child behavior, and teachers' understanding of the principles of child growth and development or in classroom procedures consistent with these principles. However, the importance of the study indicates or is indicated by the fact that a program of self-directed child study with the help of a manual for leaders can be administratively and financially practical and can indeed be self-directed. Also the experiment indicates a number of areas for further research so that expanded programs of child study based on the anecdotal record procedure can be made available to thousands of schools across the country which are

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155-154.

visual aids; (2) receptiveness to future in-service training programs in other phases of teaching; (3) improved personnel relations; (4) greater receptiveness to other innovations about the school; and (5) higher morale among the faculty members as a result of the personal recognition they received for contributions to teaching over and above the work generally expected of them."<sup>6</sup>

An in-service education program with an experimental base is illustrated by Henderson.<sup>7</sup> In an attempt to determine effective procedures for child study eight rural twelve-year schools in western New York were divided into three groups. The teachers of three of the schools used the anecdotal method of child study. The teachers of three schools engaged in an in-service program using faculty meetings and discussion of text materials on child growth and development. In two schools only the administrators read the materials used by the second group of teachers.

The hypotheses tested were:

1. One-year programs of child study utilizing the anecdotal record technique can be self-directed in rural twelve grade schools.
2. Such programs will produce the following desirable results: (a) Teachers will improve in their ability to hypothesize about the causes of behavior in children. (b) Teachers' attitudes toward child behavior will more closely agree with the attitudes of clinicians. (c) Teachers will acquire a greater understanding of the principles of growth and learning and of accepted classroom procedures in accordance with these principles.
3. Desirable results in these three respects will be greater among the teachers in the anecdotal record program than among teachers in the reading discussion program.<sup>8</sup>

Henderson goes on to describe the procedures as follows:

The writer visited the six experimental schools in the first two groups and personally described the programs to the individual

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 152.

<sup>7</sup> Richard L. Henderson, "Do Teachers Profit from Self-Directed Child Study?", *Elementary School Journal*, December, 1955, pp. 152-157.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

ices which public school teachers can furnish more effectively than can the personnel of any other agency."<sup>12</sup>

The importance of this program to in-service training is pointed up by the following statements: "In-service training of teachers may be realized in several ways: (1) Activities within the school system, (2) attendance at summer school, and (3) through approved travel. Since staff members are paid for this activity (sic.), definite improved learning experiences for students should result. Many types of professional activities may be used at the local level: Workshops, curriculum workshops, seminars, local studies and research, individual assignments, and experimental classes for students."<sup>13</sup>

Participation in the Rochester summer program is limited to teachers with at least three years of teaching experience, one of which must be in the Rochester system. While this tends to cut out those who are perhaps in most need of in-service work, it insures that the work done by the summer staff will be of significance to the school system as well as contributing to the professional growth of the staff. At this date over half the teachers of Rochester have an "extended contract."

These twelve-month plans and others like them have a great deal to commend themselves. First, the vexatious problem of time is at least partially solved. Second, it enables a school faculty to devote their full energies and talents to the in-service program for at least part of the year. Freed from the pressures of teaching, staff members make improvement a full-time job during the summer months and not something done part time under pressure at strange times of the day or evening as is the case when all of the in-service training program is crammed into the academic year. Even with a summer program there is enough to do during the school year

<sup>12</sup> Rochester, Minnesota, Public Schools, *The Summer Program, General Policies and Regulations*, mimeo, July 1, 1961, p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.



in need of sound in-service programs of education for their teachers.<sup>10</sup>

A number of schools have approached the problem of in-service education by setting up twelve-month programs. Among the best known of these plans are those developed by the public schools of Glencoe, Illinois, and Rochester, Minnesota. Collins describes the Glencoe plan as follows:

Since the Glencoe Schools have adopted a twelve-month program, teachers have a choice during the summer of pursuing further education, of travelling to enrich their teaching, or of remaining in the community for an in-service program. Teachers have every fourth summer free. About one-third of the staff remains to participate in workshops, committees, individual projects, field trips, lectures, demonstrations, discussions—and orientation, if they are new staff members.

Summer activities are planned by a group of teachers and administrators representative of the entire faculty. Committee activities last summer included work on school programs, resources, audio-visual program, personnel policies, and curriculum. Individual projects were selected by each teacher according to what he thought would make his teaching more effective. The group in individual field trips to places with scientific and sociological value were taken by teachers who will repeat the trips with their own classes next year.<sup>11</sup>

The public school teachers of Rochester, Minnesota, enjoy a similar plan. In 1946 the teachers of Rochester, Minnesota, were given the choice of either a ten- or an eleven-month contract. This was done to improve the status of salaries of the teaching staff. This plan has changed over the years and at present new teachers cannot avail themselves of the longer contract until they have satisfactorily completed a probationary period. The purposes of this summer program are "to give the staff an opportunity to engage in professional in-service activities and to offer the community educational serv-

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>11</sup> Gretchen Collins, "Teachers Plan for a New Year," *The National Elementary School Principal*, October, 1957, pp. 21-22.

service education from the standpoint of both teachers and supervisors.<sup>18</sup>

In this fashion, they suggest recurrent training needs as being:

1. Group operation.
2. Research and evidence getting.
3. Miscellaneous including workshops, conferences, and related activities.<sup>19</sup>

Group operation, as the term suggests, is concerned with such matters as agenda building, goal setting, rotation of chairmanships, overcoming frustration, reducing confusion, process analysis, handling conflict and disagreement, problem-solving, decision-making, and evaluation. For research and inquiry, Miles and Passow suggest the following activities:

1. Clarification of overall research process.
2. Doing "library" research.
3. Problem identification.
4. Creative hypothesizing.
5. Evidence getting techniques—
  - a. Questionnaires and inventories.
  - b. Projective techniques.
  - c. Interviews and conferences.
  - d. Behavior observation.
6. Analysis of data.
7. Interpretation of analyzed data.<sup>20</sup>

Miles and Passow present other training needs which cannot be classified as either group or research. These are:

1. Planning workshops and conferences.
2. Consultation.
3. Visits.
4. Demonstrations of teaching methods.
5. Production of material.
6. Improved communication skills.

<sup>18</sup> Matthew B. Miles and A. Harry Passow, "Training and the Skills Needed for *In-Service Education Programs*," National Society for the Study of Education, 56th Yearbook, Part I, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957, Chapter 14.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 354-355.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 357-358.

to challenge the most energetic staff. Without a summer program one can only hazard that some worthwhile goals are not met.

### *In-Service Education for Supervisors and Administrators*

A great deal has been written and said about in-service training for teachers. However, lamentably little has been put forward about in-service education for those who typically are given the responsibility for promoting in-service training of teachers. What has been written is largely exhortatory of the "onward and upward" approach. Because of the local nature of in-service needs this is perhaps understandable. Yet one could wish for more specific guides here.

Some help is offered by Lewis<sup>14</sup> in a summary of some of the needs which provide a partial basis for the in-service education program of instructional leaders. He indicates that an administrator needs the following knowledge:

1. An understanding of the psychology of change.
2. Knowledge of possible types of organization for in-service education.
3. Knowledge of how to use available resources for in-service education.
4. Understanding of the role of education in our society.<sup>15</sup>

Lewis identified needed skills as (1) ability to work cooperatively with staff, (2) expertness in group process.<sup>16</sup> Attitudes felt to be important are: "(1) faith in teachers, (2) respect for individual or human personality, (3) recognition of the importance of working with groups, (4) faith that a group can find reasonably sound solutions to problems, (5) patience in working with groups."<sup>17</sup>

Miles and Passow treat the problem of training for in-

<sup>14</sup> Arthur J. Lewis, "The Role of the Administrator in In-Service Education," National Society for the Study of Education, 56th Yearbook, Part I, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1957, p. 172.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 173.

ences "on-the-job" training, and "on-the-job" training tends to make one revise his points of view gained in preservice work. Experience colors both. Operating all through the process are the personality characteristics of the supervisor which enable him to accept certain approaches to in-service education and to reject others.

Viewed in this light, there is very little to generalize about in-service education for supervisors, except to say that the in-service project itself dictates what must be done. We can only hope that the triad of formal training, experience, and personality will indicate lacunae in the supervisor's skills and knowledges with sufficient clarity so that he will fill them in. The discipline of an actual in-service project is the best and perhaps the only means to insure this.

## THE ORGANIZATION OF THE IN-SERVICE PROGRAM

After supervisory needs are identified and a supervisory staff goes about the important work of organizing an in-service program, certain problems arise. Because of the variety of in-service needs from school to school, these problems will be treated differently. But since the organizational problems themselves will be present, and will need to be treated, these questions are raised.

1. *What are the purposes of the in-service project? Is the purpose primarily to train teachers in techniques of studying group process? Is the purpose to contribute a variety of opportunities for professional growth of teachers? Is the purpose to involve the professional staff in improving a single segment of an instructional area? Are the purposes of teachers clearly related to the problem at hand, or are they more closely related to monetary rewards and promotions?*

Because purpose directs activity, it is crucial that these questions be raised. The nature of the purpose is closely re-

The classification of "training needs" into group and research categories is useful for purposes of identification and discussion. One might ask, however, about the usefulness of training in group and research activities apart from an actual in-service training program. For example, training might be given in, say, "library" research or analysis of data in model or hypothetical situations. Indeed, there are those who advocate such an approach. While this is better than no training at all, it lacks a certain relevance which can be provided best by an actual in-service setting. To put it another way, the types of in-service program needed determines the nature of training demanded by supervisors, administrators, and teachers. It is no exaggeration to say that the experience of leading an in-service project is the most instructive of all activities. This is not meant to deny the importance of skills and knowledges as outlined earlier, but rather to set them in a situation where the most appropriate knowledges and skills will be brought to bear on the problem at hand.

In this sense an in-service training project for teachers becomes the training ground for supervisors and administrators. Because of differences in staff, instructional problems, supervisory and administrative personnel, etc., in-service projects will also differ. Therefore the demands placed upon instructional leaders will differ in each locale. It may be, therefore, that in-service training for supervisors and administrators needs to be examined not so much from the standpoint of discrete or related activities, but rather from the standpoint of quality in preservice training and experience together with desirable personality attributes. Much of what Miles and Passow and Lewis consider important for instructional leaders can be presented in preservice training and through courses taken "on the job." However, unless these skills and knowledges are used ("experienced"), they are useless. Moreover, ways in which they are used depend primarily on personality factors inherent in the supervisor.

Thus the in-service training program for supervisors must be viewed as an interrelated triad. Preservice education influ-

necessary to the evaluative process? If so, which can be used most effectively? How can observational techniques be used? Is training in precise observation necessary? How can this be provided? What "expert" help is needed in evaluation? Are specially designed tests needed in the evaluation? How will they be designed and used? How can laymen be used in the evaluative scheme? Are the data amenable to quantification? How will they be interpreted?

As Rehage and Haywood point out, "evaluating an in-service program is a difficult job. There is no method that can be presented on a silver platter to school systems."<sup>21</sup> Rehage and Haywood present some useful guideposts however:

1. The only significant way to evaluate the effectiveness of an in-service training program is to describe the changes that take place and the consequences of it, both in the school program and in the ways in which the administrators and teachers implement that program.
2. Such changes are complex phenomena. Therefore a variety of methods for collecting data must be used to get an adequate picture of them.
3. In order to know what changes to observe, the objectives or goals to be achieved through an in-service program must be clearly defined.
4. In evaluating an in-service education program, one must not only examine changes that have occurred in the individuals but also examine ways that have been used to achieve these ends.<sup>22</sup>

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The purpose of in-service education is instructional improvement. In this sense its purpose is identical to the purpose

<sup>21</sup> Kenneth J. Rehage and Stanley J. Haywood, "Educational News and Editorial Comment," *The Elementary School Journal*, March, 1953, p. 372.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 372-373.

lated to the success of the project, and, if the purposes are not well formulated, or if the purposes of those involved are not similarly perceived, the program is off to a bad start. In other words, if the program is not organized around well-formulated and well-understood purposes, it is not organized at all.

2. *What types of programs are needed to satisfy these purposes?* What should be the relevant emphases placed upon conferences, committee work, staff meetings, institutes, workshops, and research activity? Which of these types of programs are clearly indicated? Which are inappropriate to the identified purpose? How can the various appropriate activities be combined into a well-balanced attack on the problem on hand?

These questions relate to "format" of the program and are recorded because they face the problems of interest and competency. The program and its activities are what people do, and, if they are not interested nor competent in what they do, the program will not be as good as it could be.

3. *What resources are necessary and available in order to advance the program?* Are necessary data at hand to furnish the bases for action? Are there provisions for collecting evidence in an orderly fashion as the program develops? Are there sufficient and pertinent library materials available, including the results of pertinent research? Is sufficient money available to support the project? Are appropriate people identified for leadership roles? Can these people be "keyed in" at the time of maximum benefit? How and when can lay participation be used in the program?

These questions relate to the mechanics of the project. Unless these resources are marshaled systematically and utilized as fully as possible, the program is likely to be just talk. The commitment to in-service must be sufficiently strong to guarantee that the equipment, people, and money are available to move the program along.

4. *How will the in-service project be evaluated?* Are tests

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of supervision. But it has an added dimension that is sadly lacking in typical supervisory techniques, and this dimension includes a direct and deliberate concern with an orderly and systematic approach to supervision. At its best it presents purpose, experience, and evaluation in a balanced and forward-looking manner. By so doing, it possesses another shining virtue. It adds to the knowledge of skill and insight of those teachers fortunate enough to have had the pleasurable experience of working with such a program.

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## CHAPTER 8

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# The Curriculum, the Setting for Instructional Improvement

Supervision and curriculum are inseparable. If supervisory activities are not reflected in curriculum practice, supervision does not exist. There is no other outlet for it except the curriculum, and, if this outlet is not utilized, supervisory programs, even the most elaborate and expensive, are worse than useless.

This chapter will focus upon problems that affect this relationship and will not attempt to discuss each of the sub-

tional and curricular practices by simply listening to them. Teachers are notorious for their penchant for "talking shop."

Instruction is a teacher's professional way of life. It is what he does every day of the academic year. If one wishes to strike a responsive chord with teachers, one need only talk about better ways of teaching. Thus, it would seem that if a supervisor is to survive at all *as a supervisor* in the minds of teachers, he must deal squarely with their instructional problems. If he does not, he is, in the minds of teachers, a tolerable nuisance.

Another important reason for supervisors to be aware of their responsibility for curriculum is the increasing interest that school patrons are taking in instructional matters. Indeed, in many quarters this interest has grown into a demand for quality instruction. While it may be true that many parents are motivated primarily by self-interest (my child must go to an excellent university), their concern exerts a happy influence on the work of supervisors and teachers. There are, of course, wide variations in the interest that school patrons take in instructional programs, but, by and large, this interest is growing and will continue to grow.

Perhaps the most important reason for concern with curriculum is related to the national interest. This should not be taken to mean a narrow, chauvinistic, "America Uber Alles" point of view. Of course education has become a focal point for those who wish our nation to maintain a position of leadership in world affairs. Certainly this is a laudable aim, and one which cannot be accomplished without sound education. However, it is equally important to maintain the view that in a less dramatic sense the national interest can also be served by a system of education that encourages self-development in important areas of knowledge. This is necessary for the maintenance of a competent citizenry to carry on the work of the nation in ways that are perhaps colorless, drab, but nevertheless crucial.

Unless there is a commitment to teach and teach as well

jects ordinarily taught in the elementary school curriculum. The teaching and supervision of each curriculum area have been subjected to exhaustive examination and certainly cannot be treated adequately within the scope of this chapter.

## THE RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM

Curriculum practices can exist without supervision, although one would scarcely wish to vouch for their vitality. However, it is so blatantly obvious that supervision is utterly dependent on concern for curriculum that one need hardly bring the matter up at all. That is, if the newer concept of supervision is accepted. Of course supervisors can "do" things that are not related to curriculum and instruction, just as they have in the past. They can gather statistics and information to no avail; they can observe teachers for no good reason; they can confer with teachers about irrelevancies; and they can conduct staff meetings that are unrelated to the imperatives of teaching. Enough of this exists today to make one uneasy. The only comfort that one can draw is that these activities are not supervisory at all. They are *called* "supervisory," and this tends to give the whole concept of supervision a bad name. Supervision must find its meaning in curriculum. If it does not, it has no meaning.

This reciprocal relationship between curriculum and true supervision is evidenced by the importance that classroom teachers attach to curriculum, and their desire to improve their own curriculum offerings. This is reflected by teachers' increased participation in in-service education projects, their enrollments in colleges and university classes, and their increasing affiliations with professional organizations. Even if data were not at hand regarding these matters, one could assess teachers' interests and improvement of their instruc-

been widely used, they have influenced and altered practice in the subject curriculum, and, indeed, largely influenced the widespread use of the broad-field curriculum.

Because an understanding of curriculum design is important to the supervisory task, an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of each seems appropriate.

### *Subject-centered Curriculum*

As the term implies, a subject-centered curriculum is largely concerned with the development of skills and knowledges deemed to be important both inside and outside of school. Criticism of the subject-centered curriculum has not inveighed against the aim in itself, but rather against (1) the means by which this aim is accomplished and (2) the rather limited view of a total educational program that is implied.

First, those who are unfavorably disposed to a subject-centered curriculum claim that its users overlook certain principles of learning, particularly those related to the value of reinforcement and motivation. They say that because teaching is compartmentalized under this type of organization, the values of correlation and integration are not brought into play to effect reinforcement. Critics of the subject-centered curriculum point up the fact that unless children see some purpose in what they do, they are disinclined to work aggressively, or as aggressively as they might under a different type of curriculum pattern. They feel that by using skills and competencies in other parts of the school day, the value of what they learn is demonstrated.

Second, critics of the subject-centered curriculum feel that educational goals are limited to "mere" subject matter. Objectives that are designed to foster attitudes, appreciations, socialization, and personality development are, at best, only incidental, and at worst, ignored. This point of view in its extreme form is summed up in the absurd statement that "we teach children, not subjects."

as possible the skills and knowledge necessary for participation in our kind of society, the nation as a whole is the loser. While supervisors and teachers may not think in these terms as they go about their day-to-day work, it might be useful from time to time to bring this to mind. It is easier to do this in times of crisis, but it is important even in the face of tranquility.

## CURRICULUM DESIGN

How should the elementary school curriculum be arranged to insure that what is most important is taught and to insure that what is taught is learned? Posed in these terms, the question is impossible, but it presents an interesting basis for discussion. There have been scores of plans advanced, but most of them can be classified into one or more of the following categories:

1. Separate subject curriculum.
2. Broad field curriculum.
3. Correlated curriculum.
4. Integrated curriculum.
5. Emergent curriculum.

Each of these types of curriculum organization has been advanced by its proponents for real or imagined reasons. However, according to Herrick,<sup>1</sup> only two types of curriculum organization are used extensively in the elementary school. These are the subject curriculum and broad-field curriculum. Even though other types of curriculum patterns have not

<sup>1</sup> Virgil Herrick, "Elementary Education Programs," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, Chester Harris (Ed.), The Macmillan Company, New York, 1960, pp. 435-436. Perhaps it should be pointed out that the studies from which Herrick generalizes range in age from nine to twenty-seven years. Because Herrick was unable to find a study relating to curriculum organizational practice done later than 1953 one can assume a rather large gap in knowledge about an important matter.

resolutions, slogans, and statements of good intentions. Moreover, if many of these objectives could be taken seriously, they could best be achieved through careful systematic presentation of subject matter.

The points of view expressed above represent extremes, and actual practice falls somewhere in between. The pointing up of relationships is not precluded simply because instruction falls into a subject-centered curriculum. Nor does attention to subject matter need to be underplayed because the organization of curriculum is not subject-centered. However, philosophical considerations will dictate where the emphasis will fall. A subject-matter orientation can and does recognize values in addition to subject matter mastery and those who are not oriented toward a subject curriculum recognize the importance of subject matter.

### *Broad-Field Curriculum*

A broad field is commonly thought of as a fusion of related subjects into one instructional area. This type of organization is best illustrated by the social studies in which history, geography, and other appropriate social sciences are brought together for instructional purposes.

In this type of pattern, one is not really dealing with an entire curriculum, but rather an organization of subjects within a curriculum. Therefore it may be thought of as an extension and a refinement of the subject curriculum. The broad fields become subjects in the curriculum, just as social studies is recognized as an elementary school subject.

The advantages of the broad-field approach to curriculum are these: (1) The relationships among the subjects fused into the broad field is pointed up; (2) the number of subjects in the curriculum is reduced; (3) the material taught in a broad field is more likely to be problem-centered, farther ranging, and interest-based than the material offered in separate subjects.

Those who defend the subject-centered curriculum point out that the organization of bodies of knowledge into subjects for teaching purposes represents an efficient approach to learning. They point out that it now takes little more than a decade of instruction (on a part-time basis) to teach what the culture has amassed over the centuries. Defenders of the subject-centered curriculum also point out that the evils supposedly inherent in this curriculum pattern are not inherent at all, but rather are artifacts of method. That is, there is nothing in the organization of a curriculum around subjects which would, or indeed should, preclude pointing up important relationships. Thus it is possible to correlate and integrate knowledge that is learned systematically and in an orderly fashion. Indeed, they point out that it is impossible to teach in such a fashion that one curriculum area can be taught without reference to other subjects. Thus the fault, according to this view, lies not in the organization, but rather in the teaching offered within the framework of such organization. According to this view, poor teaching will result in poor learning and it does not make any difference in which setting it is offered.

For the second criticism, which is related to the narrow scope of the subject curriculum, proponents of this type of organization point out that little can be done with respect to attitudes, appreciations, socialization, and personality development unless the instruction of the subject matter is of high order. It has been pointed out that certain developmental characteristics can be retarded unless skills such as reading, spelling, and arithmetic are carefully and systematically taught.

In addition, there is no reason why the aims of the subject curriculum need be narrow. Objectives for each elementary school subject are limitless if attention is paid to individual abilities, interests, and needs. Proponents of the subject curriculum say that many of the more ambitious objectives common to other types of curriculums are merely



closer in design and intent to the broad-fields curriculum than any other. Indeed, some writers<sup>3</sup> view this type of pattern as a broad field, but without fusion. While the difference between a true broad field, such as social studies, and a correlated curriculum may be only of degree, the degree of difference makes a clear distinction. In a correlated curriculum, the subjects are taught as such, while in a broad field, subjects lose their separate identities.

Correlation in a curriculum practice should go beyond the kinds of almost incidental, yet important, kinds of reinforcement that good teachers commonly employ. To achieve the maximum correlation, the curriculum itself must be planned with correlative aspects built in. For example, it is not uncommon for children to work in an area of social studies which demand specialized work in reading skills. In their reading classes, however, they read selections from basic readers which bear no relationship to the reading jobs demanded elsewhere. In other instances, arithmetic programs are taught without reference to the mathematics demanded by science or social studies.<sup>4</sup> A truly correlated curriculum is not characterized by only incidental correlation but rather by an aggressive seeking of those curriculum elements which, if taught contiguously, will result in reinforcement and a clearer perception of relationships.

### *The Child-Centered Curriculum*

Perhaps it should be said at the outset that the term "child-centered" is a bit misleading when used to describe a curriculum design. By so labeling this plan there is a vague hint that other types of curriculum patterns are not child-

<sup>3</sup> Edward Krug, *Curriculum Planning*, rev. ed., Harper & Brothers, New York, 1937, pp. 103-104.

<sup>4</sup> James Curtin, "Arithmetic in the Total School Program," *The Arithmetic Teacher*, December, 1957, pp. 235-239.

Some of the disadvantages of a broad-field approach to curriculum tend to be practical, rather than theoretical. For example, an extensive command of the various subjects fused into a broad field is demanded of teachers. In addition, text and supplementary instructional materials tend to be organized along lines not compatible with this kind of organization.<sup>2</sup>

Another problem regarding the broad-field approach lies in the fact that some subjects are pulled into a "field" when they really should not be. This is best illustrated by what is often called "language arts." The language arts are usually considered to be reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The problem of fusing these into a single field is indeed a formidable one. Most often the problem has not been solved. A common practice is to teach reading as such, spelling as such, handwriting as such, children's literature as such, speaking as such (usually in that notorious time waster, "telling time"), and listening as such. All of these subjects, taught in a subject-centered fashion, are termed a "broad field." It is, of course, nothing of the sort. It is subject teaching under another banner. There have been some attempts to "fuse" spelling and creative writing in a contextual method of teaching spelling, but the evidence is clear that the effect of this approach worsens the spelling program and may detract from the quality of writing. All considered, it is probably good that most teachers resist the idea of blurring the subject boundaries into an amorphous conglomeration of language activities. Each deserves special and separate attention.

### *The Correlated Curriculum*

A correlated curriculum recognizes and utilizes the natural relationships between certain subjects without destroying their integrity. In a sense, a correlated curriculum is

<sup>2</sup> This problem is being alleviated somewhat in the fields of social studies and science. With the appearance of some textbooks which attempt to relate history to geography and physics to chemistry.

abuses of an otherwise sound approach to learning. The assumption underlying the child-centered curriculum is that if children can "feel" important needs and have these needs fulfilled, they will, over an extended period of time, have received an extremely useful education.

Critics of this type of curriculum point out that children frequently are not aware of instructional needs, and, even if they were, a curriculum shaped in these terms would not anticipate future needs. In other words, this approach to learning would leave serious gaps in students' backgrounds. In addition, some critics feel that the child-centered curriculum deals primarily with the contemporaneous. Felt needs tend to be present needs. It is doubtful, for example, that children ever feel the need to multiply fractions without some skillful and subtle encouragement from the teacher. Of course, such encouragement is highly desirable, but it does do violence to the concept of felt needs. That is, the desire to learn does not spring spontaneously from the pupil. Rather, such desire stems from motivational devices which also characterize a more direct and efficient approach to teaching.

Another problem of formidable proportions is the gathering of appropriate instructional materials to cover the far-ranging interests that a group of children is likely to present. In a curriculum framework that is chiefly characterized by on-the-spot planning, this problem is not easily dealt with. Certainly the gathering and distribution of materials indicates a high degree of preplanning which is somewhat alien to the concept of the emerging curriculum.

Of course, like most things, the emerging curriculum is not all bad. It presents some points of view that might well be emulated by more conservative educators. The child-centered curriculum recognizes the importance of teacher-pupil planning. It also recognizes important outcomes that go beyond subject-matter learning, such as creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving. These strengths, however, are

centered, if not antichild, and this, of course, is absurd. The core consideration of any curriculum is concern for the education of the children to whom it is offered. The differentiation between child-centered curriculum and other types lies in practice.

What is done in a "child-centered" curriculum that makes it different? Perhaps its most noticeable characteristic is its emergent quality. Usually large goals are set forth and these goals tend to be philosophical rather than empirical. Thus, proponents of this type of curriculum are preoccupied with the rapidly changing culture and the problems that this poses. If children in today's schools are to be confronted in adulthood by situations yet undreamed of, it is not only wrong, but wicked, to teach them in a "traditional" manner. This view places an undue emphasis on change and for this reason it is difficult to say with any assurance what curriculum content marks a child-centered approach. Some generalizations are to be found for problem-solving, creativity, and critical thinking. But the experiences through which these perfectly laudable generalizations are to be fostered must "emerge."

This emergent point of view need not, but often does, lead to some dreadful teaching situations. For example, spelling words are drawn only from needs felt by children, a notoriously unreliable source when one considers the evidence for spelling instruction. Social studies units are chosen by pupils because they reflect a felt need. Many of these tend to be trivial, whimsical, or irrelevant to well-accepted social studies aims. There are examples of second grade children "studying" international cartels, of seventh grade children "studying" jaywalking, of sixth grade children "studying" the problem of selling atomic fission plants to the United Nations, of primary grade children choosing their basic reading materials on the basis of interest rather than on the basis of instructional considerations.

One can say with some legitimacy that such practices are

## *The Departmentalized Elementary School*

The departmentalized organization is favored by those who are primarily concerned with subject-matter attainment. By those who favor this type of organization, it has been said that departmentalization provides a broader offering for the children; that specialization by teachers results in higher pupil achievement; that it provides a definiteness to the period of the school day, thus apparently making better use of time; that it facilitates coordination between elementary and secondary schools; that it utilizes staff specialties; and that it equalizes teacher load.<sup>5</sup>

Critics of departmentalization claim that in this type of organization teachers must deal with too many children in the course of a day; teachers are encouraged to think in terms of *subject matter rather than total development of children*; teachers often lack knowledge about individual pupils, and lack of attention to their problems often leads to lowered educational standards; adjustments to several teachers instead of one imposes a difficulty on many children; scheduling time allotments places needless restriction on teaching and learning; compartmentalized education obstructs continuity in learning; unity in learning and interrelatedness of knowledge are left to chance.<sup>6</sup>

The effect of departmentalization on curriculum design is quite clear. It imposes a rigidity upon the curriculum that is out of step with modern thought. Teachers become slaves to the bell. Problems of relating subject-matter areas are insoluble without a great deal of planning on the part of the teachers. No one teacher is responsible for the overall development of children except perhaps the "homeroom" teacher. Consequently while some important values related to subject-

<sup>5</sup> Rose Koury, "Elementary School Organization—What Direction Shall It Take?" *Education Briefs*, No. 37, U.S. Office of Education, January, 1960, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

sometimes wasted because the child-centered curriculum lacks efficiency and sequence.

## CURRICULUM DESIGN AND ORGANIZATION FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

School organization should depend on the nature of the curriculum to be presented. That the converse is sometimes the case is quite true and quite deplorable. In the past, schools acquired a particular organization because of factors extraneous to curriculum considerations. A case in point is the platoon school, which was developed because of a shortage of classroom space. Another is the departmentalized elementary school, which often was formed because it more closely resembled the organization of high schools. Whatever the organization of an elementary school and the reasons for such organization, curriculum practice and design are conditioned by it.

Because of the influence of organization on curriculum, one cannot talk about design apart from organization. If supervisors and teachers are to understand curriculum issues, they must look to both of these facets.

There are many types of school organization, but many of them are minor variations on a relatively few major themes. Only the major types of organization will be considered here. Some are of historical interest, others are of contemporary interest, and still others can only be termed experimental. They are:

1. The departmentalized school.
2. The self-contained classroom.
3. The modified self-contained classroom organization.
4. Ability grouping.
5. The non-graded elementary school.
6. The dual progress plan.
7. The team teaching plan.

soon has a problem with all subjects in which reading is required.

What is sometimes not understood are the more subtle relationships which exist among other subjects. For example, the mathematical understandings demanded by the social studies are enormous.<sup>1</sup> Equally important are the language skills required by the subjects in the elementary school curriculum. When these relationships go unnoticed or are only dimly realized, instruction suffers. It is no doubt accurate to say that many school programs do not perceive the important reciprocal relationships among elementary school subjects. Other school programs may have perceived the importance of these relationships, but have not acted upon them. Therefore one might legitimately advocate a plan of school organization which in itself would not guarantee the correlation and integration of learning, but which, if adopted would increase the probability of such correlation and integration. Such an organizational plan would have to provide for much of the work to be taught by one teacher who would then be in a position to relate the work of the various parts of the curriculum when appropriate.

Thus on the basis of the necessity for fusing knowledge with behavior and on the basis of the necessity for correlating and integrating appropriate subject matter, one might conclude that the self-contained classroom organization is eminently sensible.

There are some, however, who do not think the self-contained classroom is *entirely* sensible. Just as the proponents of the self-contained classroom argue from logic rather than research, so do the opponents of the self-contained classroom. Their logic stems from these assumptions:

1. No individual teacher knows enough to teach *all* the common branches of learning.

<sup>1</sup> National Society for the Study of Education, *The Teaching of Arithmetic*, 50th Yearbook, Part II, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1951, Chapter 1.

matter teaching are realized, other values are lost. Because the curriculum design cannot utilize the natural reinforcements possible under other forms of organization, one might defend the idea that a departmentalized organization, whose avowed merit is subject-matter teaching, fails to achieve this objective because of its built-in flaw. This flaw is the imposition of a curriculum design which must be followed if departmentalization is to be achieved, but which, if followed, precludes the utilization of important principles of learning.

### *The Self-contained Classroom*

The self-contained classroom is designed so that a single teacher presents the entire curriculum for a given grade to a group of students. There are good features and bad features to such an organization, but on balance, the advantages are preponderant.

If one takes the view that curriculum should consist of subject matter *plus* behavioral learnings, certain assumptions can be made. Important among these is the assumption that the acquisition of knowledge and the development of certain types of behavior are closely related. For example, instruction in science without some attention to the development of scientific modes of thought (which are behaviors) is incomplete. The same point may be made about instruction in the social studies. If process is important, it follows that procedures as well as content must be taught. The procedures by which children solve their problems are the behaviors they manifest, and, because these behaviors are not peculiar to a single situation, they are best understood and developed by a single teacher in a variety of situations.

A second assumption also may be drawn from the nature of subject matter itself. Every subject in the elementary school curriculum is dependent on other subjects for even the most rudimentary understanding. A part of this interdependence is well recognized, as in reading and *all* other subjects. Almost everyone realizes that a child with a reading problem



2. Specialization yields greater achievement for both the poor and good student.
3. The work load of an elementary school teacher is impossible under the burdens imposed by the self-contained classroom organization.
4. Because the work load of the teacher becomes so heavy, many of the claims made for the self-contained classroom are not realized in practice.

There seems to be some merit in this logic. The content of subject matter areas has grown enormously in just the past fifteen years. More, rather than fewer, demands are placed upon teachers year by year. The task of keeping up with any one field is difficult and to expect elementary school teachers to stay abreast of significant developments in all fields is rather an ambitious expectation. This problem of keeping up is complicated by the self-contained classroom organization because the teaching load sharply curtails the time and energies which can be devoted to professional reading and reflection.

It would appear then that the question is not whether there should be specialization in the elementary school, but rather how much and in what subjects. The following section will sharpen the question further.

### *The Modified Self-contained Classroom*

The intent of the modified self-contained classroom is to preserve the virtues of the completely self-contained classroom and to strengthen it by a moderate amount of specialization. The fully departmentalized elementary school represents one end of a continuum and the self-contained classroom the other. The plan under discussion here seeks a middle ground. There are certain subjects in the elementary school which demand a certain degree of talent as well as teaching skill. These subjects are usually thought of as art, music, and physical education. If these areas of instruction

can be turned over to special teachers, two troublesome matters will be greatly ameliorated. First, the quality of instruction in these subjects will be improved because they are offered by those particularly trained for them. Second, the elementary school teacher will have at her disposal time for planning, reading, observation, and reflection hitherto denied. Under this plan the classroom teacher will keep almost all of the curriculum under her charge with all the advantages that this offers. There will be sufficiently long association with the class each day so that its needs may be assessed and met on a continuing basis. The moderate amount of specialization will not interfere and may enhance the quality of instruction in all of its aspects.

Those who favor a completely self-contained classroom organization argue that music, art, and physical education are integral parts of the school program and therefore should be subject to the classroom teacher's control in the same fashion as are other curricular elements. They cite problems of integrating and correlating these subjects into and with social studies. They point out the value of the teacher's observation of her children in these more informal situations. Finally, they raise the spectre of the "bad precedent" which might be extended.

While some of these arguments are scarcely worth considering, others made a valid, although not insuperable, point. It is probably true that the problem of integration will become more difficult. However, careful planning can overcome much of this. In addition, it should be pointed out that much of the integration between these subjects and the rest of the curriculum is somewhat artificial and perhaps best avoided anyway. If a sharp cutback in carving "ancient" temples from soap and murals of sleeping Mexicans should occur, it will be all to the good. What is likely to occur is a type of integration that makes a contribution to learning rather than activities that serve splendidly to kill time but

2. Specialization yields greater achievement for both the poor and good student.
3. The work load of an elementary school teacher is impossible under the burdens imposed by the self-contained classroom organization.
4. Because the work load of the teacher becomes so heavy, many of the claims made for the self-contained classroom are not realized in practice.

There seems to be some merit in this logic. The content of subject matter areas has grown enormously in just the past fifteen years. More, rather than fewer, demands are placed upon teachers year by year. The task of keeping up with any one field is difficult and to expect elementary school teachers to stay abreast of significant developments in all fields is rather an ambitious expectation. This problem of keeping up is complicated by the self-contained classroom organization because the teaching load sharply curtails the time and energies which can be devoted to professional reading and reflection.

It would appear then that the question is not whether there should be specialization in the elementary school, but rather how much and in what subjects. The following section will sharpen the question further.

### *The Modified Self-contained Classroom*

The intent of the modified self-contained classroom is to preserve the virtues of the completely self-contained classroom and to strengthen it by a moderate amount of specialization. The fully departmentalized elementary school represents one end of a continuum and the self-contained classroom the other. The plan under discussion here seeks a middle ground. There are certain subjects in the elementary school which demand a certain degree of talent as well as teaching skill. These subjects are usually thought of as art, music, and physical education. If these areas of instruction

substantial evidence that grouping in terms of ability does not achieve its aims.<sup>8</sup>

Superficially, ability groups appear to make sense. For decades schools in the United States have attempted to form homogeneous groups. The most striking example of this is the graded school. If some degree of homogeneity can be achieved by grouping children into grade groups, increased homogeneity can be achieved by refining grade groups into levels of ability. What is often overlooked is the fact that grade groups are not very homogeneous to begin with and ability grouping does not make any appreciable inroads into the variability that exists in any classroom.<sup>9</sup> This is pointed out clearly by Workman<sup>10</sup> who selected from a sample of children the one hundred highest and the one hundred lowest scores on a test of paragraph reading. He then tested the achievement of these children in other curricular areas and found the overlap of scores to be quite extensive. Children who earned top scores in paragraph reading were surpassed in every area by some children who earned the lowest scores on the same test. In other words, if ability groups had been formed using the paragraph reading test as the criterion for grouping, some children in the lowest group would have achieved more than some children in the highest group in every skill except paragraph reading.

It would appear then that ability groups really do very little to reduce variability in any comprehensive way. Consequently, an alternative to ability grouping is the formation

<sup>8</sup> Walter W. Cook, *Grouping and Promotion in the Elementary School*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1941. See also the review of research presented by John I. Goodlad in *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, *op. cit.*, pp. 223-224.

<sup>9</sup> Marvin Burr, "A Study of Homogeneous Grouping in Terms of Individual Variations and the Teaching Problem," *Teachers College Contributions to Education*, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York, 1931. See also Walter W. Cook, *loc. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> John Workman, *Study of Trait Differences in High and Low Achieving Pupils*, unpublished master's paper, University of Minnesota, 1937.

which add nothing to the understanding of either the social studies or art.

The argument about the necessity for teachers to have the children in class all day for observation need not pose a problem at all. Indeed the advantages all run in the direction of having special instruction. There is no reason why a classroom teacher cannot observe her class while it is being instructed by a special teacher. Actually such observation is likely to be more fruitful since the observation can be made the focus of attention with the observer freed from the pressures of teaching.

The argument of beginning a "bad precedent" is not particularly enlightening. First, there is no evidence to show that such an organization is bad. Second, if it proved to be "bad," only foolish people would preserve it as a precedent. Third, the argument of the "bad precedent" is really often a rationalization for preserving the status quo.

It may be that opposition to a modified self-contained classroom plan of organization stems not so much from theoretical considerations as it does from fiscal considerations. Certainly such a plan would raise the cost of educational programs. This may be a compelling reason for not instituting such plans in some school districts, but generally it is a plan that is not out of reach of most schools. Speaking of precedents, one is in existence at the secondary school level. There a sufficient number of physical education teachers, art teachers, and music teachers are hired to cover the classes. There is no reason why the same practice cannot be followed at the elementary school level.

### *Ability Grouping*

There has been a renewed interest in ability grouping in the elementary school. When one considers the durability of these arguments in favor of ability grouping, the paucity of relevant research is astonishing. On the other hand, there is

of patterns, with some programs differing markedly from others.<sup>14</sup>

### *The Dual Progress Plan*

An experimental program of considerable interest is the dual progress plan. This organization attempts to combine the self-contained classroom type of organization with an ungraded program characterized by a high degree of specialization.<sup>15</sup> It is assumed by the formulators of this plan that there exists a universal need of elementary school children for a basic knowledge of language skills and social studies instruction. These subjects are offered to all children in a typical graded structure for one half-day. The other half of the school day is ungraded, but not in the fashion described by Goodlad and Anderson.<sup>16</sup> In addition to being ungraded, children are grouped for instruction on the basis of interest and achievement. Thus a fourth grade child might be grouped with fifth and sixth graders in arithmetic if he is sufficiently able. A slower learning sixth grader might be grouped with younger children for science instruction. What results is a plan that resembles the old platoon system with one half-day spent on the core subjects and the other half-day spent on interage groups that are non-graded and departmentalized. The advantages of this plan are conceived to be the following:

1. Each child receives a basic education in what can be termed the cultural imperatives.
2. Each child is encouraged to proceed as rapidly as possible through science, mathematics, art, music, and foreign languages.
3. The ungraded segment is taught by specialists who are alert to the instructional needs of the children in their field of

<sup>14</sup> For example, the program in West St. Paul, Minnesota, bears very little resemblance to the pioneer program in Milwaukee.

<sup>15</sup> George Stoddard, *The Dual Progress Plan*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1961.

<sup>16</sup> Goodlad and Anderson, *loc. cit.*

of reasonably sized groups in which pupils can be grouped around the criteria of needs.

### *The Non-graded Plan of Organization*

The non-graded plan of organization rests on the assumption that graded schools, by their very nature, are beset with evils which preclude continuous progress of children. One of the chief blocks to continuous progress is the practice of non-promotion still found in many elementary schools.<sup>11</sup> In order to remove the block to continuous progress, grades must be removed. In most instances the criterion for forming non-graded groups is reading ability. In this sense the non-graded school is really organized in terms of ability groups with reading as the criterion for grouping.<sup>12</sup> Those who adopt this type of organization must realize that in every subject, except reading, the full range of abilities is to be expected.

The real virtue of the plan lies in the fact that retentions are reduced although not eliminated, at least in some of the plans. Instead of repeating the first grade because of lack of reading ability, children move along in their groups for three years. Then if they are judged not to be ready for the intermediate grades, they may spend an additional year in the primary unit.

Although there appears to be considerable interest in this plan, it must still be regarded as somewhat experimental. The evidence regarding achievement in non-graded primary units compared with achievement in graded schools is somewhat conflicting.<sup>13</sup> In addition there seems to be a variety

<sup>11</sup> John I. Goodlad and Robert H. Anderson, *The Non-Graded Elementary School*, Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York, 1959.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Elementary School Principals, NEA, *Those First School Years*, The Department, Washington, D.C., 1960, pp. 151-159.

<sup>13</sup> Mary King Skapski, "Ungraded Primary Reading Program: An Objective Evaluation," *Elementary School Journal*, October, 1960, pp. 41-45. Robert F. Carbone, "A Comparison of Graded and Non-Graded Elementary Schools," *Elementary School Journal*, November, 1961, pp. 82-88.

ever, that if certain conditions are met even in the simplest type of organization, instruction will flourish. These conditions are three in number:

1. Reasonably sized classes.
2. Wealth of instructional equipment.
3. Teachers of high ability.

These conditions are highly interdependent. That is, one cannot choose one over the others. Small classes in the hands of a poor teacher will probably result in a program not very different from large class instruction. Certainly the evidence on achievement in large and small classes may be so construed.<sup>17</sup> Small classes with good teachers and limited materials is a limited program. All three conditions must be met. If each classroom has relatively few children, a wide range of instructional equipment and a fine teacher, the need for elaborate administrative design would probably vanish.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Supervisory practices and curriculum considerations are inseparable. If one wishes to deal with improvement practices, he must be familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the various types of curriculum and the influence of classroom organization. It appears that, although organizational plans have come and gone, the irreducible minimum for sound organization is a good teacher with a small class, which has at its disposal a wide-ranging supply of instructional equipment. Only when these conditions are met in any kind of an organizational scheme, will there be a maximum of opportunity to learn. If supervisors do no more than to bring this brave new world about, they will have accomplished an enormity.

<sup>17</sup> Herbert F. Spitzer, "Class Size and Pupil Achievement in Elementary Schools," *Elementary School Journal*, October, 1954, pp. 82-86.



specialization and will therefore detect the learning difficulties earlier and be able to stretch the talented child better than a non-specialist teacher.

This plan, while new in some respects, bears a striking resemblance to older types of organization. As far as the core teachers are concerned, it is quite clearly a platoon school. It would appear that these teachers with one group in the morning and another in the afternoon have the work load that is quite onerous. It would also seem that certain subjects outside the core areas can be related to the core only with difficulty. Finally, this organization offers an administrative design that is exceedingly complicated.

### *Recommended Design*

The curriculum plan recommended here rests on these assumptions:

1. Subject matter is important.
2. Teachers must know the nature of the learner who is presumably being taught.
3. Knowledge and behavior must be advanced simultaneously.
4. The natural relationship of various subjects must be pointed out and utilized.
5. Subject matter areas which demand talent as well as teaching ability must not be taught by people devoid of the necessary talent.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that these assumptions point clearly to a curriculum organized into subjects with ample opportunity for correlation and integration with special teachers in the fields of music, art, and physical education. Furthermore, if these assumptions are accepted, the elementary school will be organized on the basis of the modified self-contained classroom.

In the face of a paucity of experimental evidence related to newer plans of organization, it is not possible really to compare the achievement and behavioral development of children in each type of organization. It would seem, how-

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## CHAPTER 9

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### The New Teacher and Supervision

While the need for sound supervisory service is always present, it is perhaps most needed by those who are beginning their teaching careers. Because the skills and behaviors demanded by any profession are complex and slowly learned, almost all beginners are subjected to close scrutiny and painstaking evaluation. Witness the physician, who, after earning his degree, internes under the watchful eyes of a hospital staff. The young beginning attorney who invariably occupies the lowest status in a law firm, is carefully coached and trained in his profession by his superiors.

teacher faces problems that are difficult to anticipate. Not all of these are instructional problems, although many are related to instruction. For example, classroom management is troublesome for many beginners. Routine matters such as attendance procedures, use of cumulative records, and drawing supplies are added to the important work of instruction. At the risk of being utterly obvious, the inexperience of new teachers will be reflected in:

1. Instruction.
2. Curriculum.
3. Planning.
4. Management.
5. Administration of classroom routine.

Each of these areas contains overlapping problems, and generalization about their components is difficult. That is, not all beginners are faced with the same problems. Even when there is a similarity of problem areas, there will be differences in degree.

Perhaps the emphasis should be placed on supervisory awareness of the problems that stem from inexperience. In order to develop such awareness, the technical skills of the supervisor must be brought into play together with appropriate supportive behavior.

### *The Problem of Fear of Supervision*

There are a variety of reasons for fear of supervision. Perhaps one of the reasons is the term itself, which implies a superior-inferior relationship which should not be emphasized. Many beginners feel that a supervisor is authority incarnate. While some euphemistic titles have emerged in recent years, such as consultant, coordinator, and the like, a certain amount of insecurity tends to remain.

When fear or insecurity is present, the responsibility for its amelioration clearly rests with those charged with supervision. In an earlier section of this volume, mention was made

The assumption seems to be that preservice professional education, no matter how excellent, is a prelude to the further education that can only be offered by working with "old hands" in a real occupational setting.

## PROBLEMS OF SUPERVISION OF NEW TEACHERS

There are a number of problems associated with beginning teachers that make good supervisory practice crucial. These are:

1. The problem of inexperience.
2. Fear of supervision.
3. Conflict of preservice education with in-service work.
4. The multiplicity of pressures on a new teacher.
5. A zeal to attempt too much.

### *The Problem of Inexperience*

While it may be an oversimplification to indicate that all problems that confront a beginning teacher are due to inexperience, it would not be much of one. The closest approximation to "experience" that a new teacher has is student teaching. Although student teaching is commonly regarded as the capstone of preservice training and is rightly held in high esteem by almost everyone, it anticipates only some of the on-the-job problems that a beginner faces. Since many school systems follow the rather odd practice of placing inexperienced teachers in difficult settings, the problem of inexperience and its meaning for supervision takes on enormous proportions.<sup>1</sup>

Even under the most favorable conditions, the beginning

<sup>1</sup> William Rabinowitz and Ida Williams, "Initial Report on the Teaching Careers of the 1953-1954 Class of Student Teachers of the Municipal Colleges of the City of New York," Research Series 35, Division of Teacher Education, Board of Higher Education of the City of New York, January, 1958.

### *The Problem of Pressures on New Teachers*

Settling into a new teaching position creates a variety of demands. When these demands fall upon one who has not experienced them before, they sometimes assume an overwhelming aspect. This is peculiarly true of the beginning teacher for whom things happen with a rush. The business of program planning, learning about a classroom full of pupils, getting the courses of study in hand, procuring materials, attending meetings, and learning routines on top of the teaching itself tends to leave a new teacher a bit breathless. The supervisory task here is to know when intrusion means help or hindrance. There is much to be said for letting new personnel work through problems themselves, but there is nothing to be said for a laissez-faire approach. The problem is to understand what is best learned by the teacher without help and what cannot be learned without help. Compulsory meetings where already-dedicated teachers are exhorted to be more dedicated are not just harmless; they are a waste of time for people who have little time to waste. Meetings at which curriculum bulletins are "explained" to new teachers are often bewildering and self-defeating.<sup>3</sup> What is needed is clear exposition of routine affairs such as attendance procedures, management of supplies, and the like. These things, like Mr. Blanding's boiler, can be dealt with. Creative and insightful supervisory talents should be expended on proper supervisory tasks which, for the most part, will be teaching and learning. If demands are to be placed upon new teachers, they should be demands with a high return. The supervisor who understands this is simply a better one than one who does not.

<sup>3</sup> Geneva Corder, "An Evaluation of Supervisory Services for Newly Appointed Teachers," *Elementary School Journal*, May, 1954, pp. 509-516. In her study Corder found that such meetings ranked low as a supervisory aid.

of the importance of supervisory behavior. Its significance with respect to teachers' feeling about supervision cannot be exaggerated. In every way possible, new teachers who are tentative about their work and doubtful about the role of supervisors should be made to feel comfortable and easy. This was pointed up by Wiles, who, after surveying the research on the evaluation of supervisory procedures and practices, states "the teacher's perception of a particular supervisory activity is dependent upon the ways his supervisor has used it."<sup>2</sup> To put it another way, two supervisors using the same techniques in different fashions will achieve different results with the same teacher.

### *The Problem of Conflict of Preservice Education with in-Service Work*

One of the tasks that a beginning teacher must accomplish within a fairly short time is to identify himself with the objectives of school in which he works. Although the major objectives of education are generally the same in most schools, the means of accomplishing them may be quite different. For example, major objectives for reading instruction are quite similar; i.e., to teach children to read fluently with comprehension. Although there is total acceptance of this purpose, controversies have raged over the years with respect to phonics, word method, workbooks, drill, flash cards, and basic reading materials. It is entirely possible for a new teacher to have a preservice education markedly different in point of view and practice from his first teaching position. This need not be a serious problem, for most teachers are adaptable, but it is a problem that needs the attention of the supervisory staff.

<sup>2</sup> Kimball Wiles, "Supervision," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, Chester Harris (Ed.), The Macmillan Company, New York, 1960, p. 1444.



## SUPERVISION AND ORIENTATION OF NEW TEACHERS

Perhaps the most time-honored method of helping new teachers is the "orientation" program. Of course, preschool meetings are not confined to elements of supervision. Indeed, in some, orientation to supervision is completely lacking.

### *Supervision and the Orientation Meeting*

Instructional improvement is best achieved within the context of the ongoing program as it develops through the school year. It follows, then, that in the orientation meeting the stage must be lighted and the setting, if not the action, shown. In the orientation meeting, therefore, the following items appear to be logical:

1. What are the purposes of supervision for *this* school *this* year?
2. Who are the people responsible for helping the teachers help the children?
3. What will the supervisory program deal with this year?
4. What supervisory techniques are usually used in this school?
5. What is the teacher's part in the supervisory program?

Each of these questions can and should be answered as specifically as possible. They are questions that new teachers need to have answered. Placing these items on the agenda of an orientation program will have the added virtue of driving supervisory personnel to consider matters that might otherwise be successfully avoided.

### *Orientation to Supervision and the Handbook*

The handbook as an orientation device is well regarded. It deals with matters that can be clearly explicated without great regions of doubt. For this reason, handbooks tend to be "administrative" in character. However, there are supervisory

### *The Problem of the Overzealous Teacher*

While a willingness to work is commendable, an overabundance of zeal can be a bit appalling. Most supervisors have experienced the new teacher whose ambitions were exceeded only by his energy. Here the problem is not motivation but restraint. And it is a most delicate problem, indeed. To preserve the freshness, the drive and the "morning's-at-seven" attitude while firmly saying no to starry-eyed young people filled with essentially non-educative ideas is, in many cases, impossible.

What is needed by the teacher is not restriction but appraisal. In this regard, the supervisor must be the key person. To cite an example: A beginning teacher has been thoroughly trained and perhaps indoctrinated in the virtues of a completely individualized reading program. However, his professor's eloquence has failed to reach the school district where he is presently employed. Consequently, the teacher wishes to proceed to set things right, oblivious to the extraordinary complexities involved. At this point he should be asked some rather searching questions with respect to instructional equipment, skills needed by his class, objectives he hopes to accomplish, procedures he will use, instructional material he will need to develop, reading skills demanded by other phases of the curriculum, evaluation of progress, and the problem of general management. He is not forbidden; he is made aware. With most intelligent people, awareness will create a more circumspect approach and perhaps a cautious eye toward avoiding disaster.

Some people might term such an approach as "democratic." Perhaps so. But more importantly a supervisor who works in this fashion tends to preserve in the new teacher the unspoiled attitude that is so characteristic of beginners.

Although the problem of the overzealous beginning teacher is exasperating and delicate, it is a rather nice problem to have.

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items which are often included. For example, community resources useful to the new teacher might be included. The testing program together with its aims, instruments, and special personnel can be clearly explained. Perhaps as important as anything in the handbook is the statement of instructional objectives which, although often general, is useful in pointing out to the new teacher the philosophical milieu in which he finds himself.

The point to be emphasized is that supervisory aspects of the school program have a proper and, indeed, important place in the teacher's handbook.

Often the handbook is used by teachers only for a short period of time, usually the first few days. Usually handbooks are written on the assumption of more ambitious use and contain items of utility throughout the school year. There are some approaches that may insure a more thoroughgoing use of a handbook. One is to refer to the book in lieu of detailed explanation. Thus, instead of running over the details of the testing program, the staff can be referred to the appropriate section of the manual. This may be risky, but it is likely to result in more, rather than less, use of the book.

Another way of insuring continued use of the handbook is to keep it relevant. There is no reason why anyone should use an outmoded document. If each year the matter of revision of the book is made the center of faculty attention, it is more likely to have some pertinence to current issues.

### *Orientation to Supervision and Correspondence with New Staff*

New teachers usually sign their contracts well before they begin their formal teaching duties. The opportunities provided by this hiatus between signing and teaching are largely unexploited. In the most practical fashion, the transition from candidate to employee should impose certain obligations upon the hiring school system. A great many of these obliga-

tions can be dealt with in a most satisfactory fashion through correspondence.

What matters can be dealt with by correspondence? Since the new teacher is probably having some long thoughts about his new position, he may wish to know:

1. What kind of class will I have? (What is the range of abilities? Are there any particularly able students I shall have to provide for in a special way? Is the class difficult to manage? Are there individuals about whom I should know particularly? What are they like as a group?)
2. What texts and instructional aids will be at my disposal? (Are these books available locally for examination? Do I know how to run an overhead projector, and the type of film projector in my new school?)
3. What is contained in the courses of study? (Am I familiar with the material to be covered? Which activities present special problems for me? Are the supplementary books locally available? Are there special problems of planning?)
4. How do I set my daily program? (What time allotments shall I follow? Are there special teachers? How much time do they use? Is there a best time to teach certain subjects?)
5. What will my principal and/or supervisor be like?

All of these questions, and questions like them—with the exception of the last one—can be answered rather clearly in letters and through other materials such as book lists, copies of daily programs used by previous teachers, brief courses of study, and the like.

The intriguing question posed last is probably best answered for the teacher by the fact the other questions were anticipated and help was offered. Surely attention such as this, not beyond the reach of most supervisors, will be most helpful in a tangible way and, furthermore, will make the teacher feel that he is indeed welcome as an important member of the school's faculty.

### *Orientation to Supervision and Conferences*

Much of the gloomy evidence regarding supervisory conferences was covered earlier. Perhaps one can hope that con-

ferences intended to help new teachers "break in" might be more pointed and relevant than those described earlier.

The purpose for a conference during an orientation period may not be as "supervisory" as those held later in the year. However, a conference before the opening of school is perhaps the most appropriate way to deal with lingering questions. After the orientation meetings, after having read the materials sent during the summer, including the handbook, the beginning teacher is about as ready to raise questions as his inexperience will permit; hence the rationale for the conference. Answering questions, clearing up doubtful matters, and straightening out misconceptions are reasons enough.

Yet there is another compelling reason for holding conferences with new teachers. People beginning the profession of teaching are apt to be tentative and insecure. One facet of this perfectly healthy insecurity is related to acceptance and an anxiety to succeed (or at least not to do badly). The conference provides an excellent setting to deal with this apprehension. While these apprehensive attitudes will not vanish, they may dwindle. If they do, the conference was eminently meritorious. If they do not, nothing has been lost.

In conferences for new teachers, practice varies widely. For example, conference time ranges from four to six weeks in Glencoe, Illinois; Battle Creek, Michigan, schools devote two weeks to this activity. Other school systems use only one or two days for conferences for a new staff. Regrettably some schools have no planned activity of this nature.

## CONTINUING SUPERVISION THROUGHOUT THE FIRST YEAR

While supervisory programs should touch all teachers, they should touch beginning teachers in a special way. These



teachers should have every opportunity to participate in the programs underway in their buildings, but they should also be supplied with additional supervisory help simply because they are new. This additional help should be both individual and group. Individual help is difficult to organize and should be given when needed. Supervisory help for groups of new teachers can and should be organized to provide for continuing systematic supervision throughout the school year.

### *Examples of Continuing Supervision*

Corder's description and evaluation of a continuing supervisory plan for new teachers is most pertinent to this discussion.<sup>4</sup> This plan, used by the Austin Public Schools, utilizes seven activities. These are:

1. *Orientation day.* This was set up to acquaint new teachers with school policies and routine matters.
2. *Presession building meetings.* These meetings were held to make plans for the formal opening of school.
3. *Autumn curriculum day.* This meeting was districtwide and topics for discussion ranged widely over a variety of subjects. This meeting was not designed exclusively for beginning teachers.
4. *Regional professional meetings.* These meetings were sessions in which the faculties of neighboring elementary schools met with the supervisory staff to consider instructional problems.
5. *Conferences with supervisors.* This activity included all conferences which new teachers held with supervisors during the year.
6. *Faculty meetings in each school.* These meetings included all regularly scheduled meetings and those called for special reasons. A majority of these meetings were devoted to in-service programs.
7. *Spring curriculum day.* This meeting was identical in structure and purpose to autumn curriculum day.

The significance of Corder's description lies in the fact that a program of continuous supervisory guidance was

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 509-516.

offered to all new teachers on a systematic basis. Perhaps it should be pointed out that Corder found that a very strong majority of the new teachers found each of these activities helpful.

The public schools of Minneapolis offer another example of continuous supervision for new teachers. Each teacher new to the system attends a series of meetings for a period of two years. These meetings are in-service in character and are divided into grade level groups. Each is under the direction of a "helping teacher," who is an outstanding classroom teacher freed from teaching to aid new teachers. In addition to conducting in-service meetings, each helping teacher visits the classrooms of the new teachers assigned to him on a systematic basis. This plan enables the helping teacher to help the beginner with specific problems peculiar to individuals as well as offering aid and instruction with respect to instructional problems common to all.

Ebey and Hamilton describe a plan which also utilizes teacher-consultants.<sup>5</sup> The reasoning upon which the plan was based runs as follows:

We have many new teachers who need assistance in achieving greater instructional competence. Our pre-school induction program, initiated in 1948, is functioning well in helping new teachers find housing and become acquainted with our city and in familiarizing them with our school system, our policies and our instructional program. But the follow-up assistance in the classroom is not so effective as it should be. Some experienced teachers also feel the need for more help than principals can provide.

Our staff of eleven supervisors, chiefly subject specialists working from the kindergarten through Grade XII, is able but too small, a ratio of one supervisor to two hundred teachers. . . . We need to augment our supervisory staff with a group of consultants who will work almost exclusively helping teachers in their classrooms become better teachers.

<sup>5</sup> George W. Ebey and Norman K. Hamilton, "An Effective Approach to Supervision," *Elementary School Journal*, September, 1953, pp. 23-28.

Why not select outstanding experienced classroom teachers for this assignment? Let's ask them to serve as consultants for a year or, at most, two years.<sup>6</sup>

Ebey and Hamilton indicate that the plan was eminently successful. Teachers who evaluated this program were almost unanimous in their enthusiasm. Only 4 of 395 teachers queried found the plan "not helpful and pleasant." Reasons given by teachers for liking the plan include:

1. Consultants are willing to take classes when asked.
2. Consultants arrange conferences at a time convenient to teachers.
3. Consultants come on invitation and give advance notice of their visits.
4. Consultants often bring materials.
5. Consultants make no reports on teachers.<sup>7</sup>

The Portland plan is interesting and, according to those associated with it, effective. Perhaps part of its effectiveness is due to the fact that the consultants all return to their own classrooms after one or two years. This aspect of the plan may have a tendency to keep the realities of classroom instruction in the forefront of their thinking.

It is notable that most descriptions of continuous supervision for teachers new to the profession come from urban areas. This can be explained, in part, by the fact that larger school systems are most able to afford non-teaching principals in addition to other types of supervisory help. This is pointed up in a study by the National Education Association<sup>8</sup> which indicates that 30.3 per cent of new teachers in the largest cities found their principals to be of little or no help, while 36.4 per cent of new teachers in the smallest communities made the same comment. When asked about help from supervisors and consultants, 32 per cent of the teachers from the largest districts indicated that they received little or no help from

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>8</sup> National Education Association, "First Year Teachers in 1954-55," *Research Bulletin*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, February, 1956, p. 33.

these sources. When teachers from the smallest communities were asked about help received from supervisors and consultants, 69.5 per cent reported little or no help.\*

That large school districts can and do provide more supervisory help than small districts is borne out by Dean's study of elementary school organization and administration:

TABLE 4 • SPECIAL SUBJECT ASSISTANCE IN URBAN PLACES  
WITH POPULATIONS ABOVE 2500, BY U.S. TOTALS AND  
PERCENTAGES, AND BY POPULATION GROUPS\*

Subject	United States		Population Group Percentages			
	Per Cent	Total	I	II	III	IV
Music						
Special Assistance	89.3	3846	96.2	88.0	89.7	89.1
No Assistance	10.7	461	3.8	12.0	10.3	10.9
Physical Ed. and Health						
Special Assistance	52.4	2258	93.4	68.0	50.8	49.5
No Assistance	47.8	2049	6.6	32.0	49.2	50.5
Art						
Special Assistance	51.5	2216	86.8	77.3	65.3	43.4
No Assistance	48.5	2091	13.2	22.7	34.7	56.6
Speech						
Special Assistance	39.1	1684	74.5	68.0	52.0	30.9
No Assistance	60.9	2693	25.5	32.0	48.0	69.1
Library						
Special Assistance	32.7	1909	49.1	30.7	29.4	33.3
No Assistance	67.3	2898	50.9	69.3	70.6	66.7
Reading						
Special Assistance	22.8	983	48.1	34.7	25.4	19.8
No Assistance	77.2	3324	51.9	65.3	74.6	80.2
Science						
Special Assistance	8.0	344	27.4	14.7	6.3	6.9
No Assistance	92.0	3963	72.6	85.3	93.7	93.1

\* Stuart E. Dean, *Elementary School Organization and Administration*, Bulletin 1960, No. 11, U.S. Office of Education, Washington, D.C., 1960, p. 78.

One can only agree with Dean when he says: "Within population groups, the largest cities provide most special sub-

\* *Ibid.*, p. 33.

grouped into the following categories:<sup>11</sup>

1. Problems of discipline and management.
2. Lack of knowledge of pupils.
3. Techniques of planning.
4. Instruction.
5. Understanding the objectives of the school.
6. Using special school services.
7. Planning for and working with exceptional children.

Of course, research studies on the problems of beginning teachers reveal many more than those listed above. However, since many are related to supervision only peripherally, they are not included here. Those that are listed deal directly and importantly with supervision.

If each of these problems could be dealt with in a discrete fashion, they might be reduced to more manageable proportions. However, their interrelatedness introduces a complexity that is not easy to deal with. When a teacher reports a problem with discipline, for example, one might regard this as the visible symptom of a more subtle syndrome of problems. Thus while the teacher reports a problem with classroom management, it is likely that he also has a problem with instruction, a lack of knowledge of his pupils, and difficulty using special services of the school.

The problem of the supervisor is to help teachers ferret out a multiple causation for each of these problems. In the general problem of classroom management, a list of dos and don'ts about punishment and reprisal may be interesting, but not very useful. Of course, a direct approach is often needed

The influence of all the classroom variables must be assessed and plans for improvement made in the light of a total evaluation.

There is some evidence to indicate that the greatest help for new teachers comes from other teachers.<sup>12</sup> Generally, this help is of two kinds. The first is the type of help related to specific questions, such as how to check out supplies, report absences, write up lesson plans, deal with certain children, and the like. The second type of help offered to new teachers by other teachers is not quite so specific, but perhaps more important. A majority of new teachers feel that the greatest help they receive stems from a feeling of security and satisfaction in their work.<sup>13</sup>

The fact that the most help for new teachers comes from other teachers in no way derogates the supervisory process as it is defined in this book. Indeed, good supervision demands a great deal of mutual support from staff members. Where it is present, it should be capitalized. Where it is absent, it should be developed.

Some school people recognize the important influence of experienced teachers on those who are new and therefore assign veteran teachers to help beginners. This plan should be encouraged and instituted where it does not exist because it results in more help to new teachers than would otherwise be given or asked for. Although many supervisors pride themselves on their availability, or "open-door" policy, they are probably mistaken if they assume that new teachers take advantage of such help as often as they need to. New staff members seem to have a reluctance to "bother" the supervisor about a question that might be regarded as trivial. However, they appear to be more willing to seek help from other teachers. An added dividend results from the time saved by both teacher and supervisor.

<sup>12</sup> NEA Research Division, "Local Education Association at Work," Research Bulletin, No. 26, Washington, D.C., 1948, pp. 105-139.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

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<sup>11</sup> Clifford P. Archer, "In-Service Education," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, Chester W. Harris (Ed.), The Macmillan Company, New York, 1960, p. 704.

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<sup>12</sup> NEA Research Division, "Local Education Association at Work," Research Bulletin, No. 26, Washington, D.C., 1948, pp. 105-139.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.



In this regard there is a durable ghost that should be laid to rest. There is a persistent myth that new teachers are badly treated by more experienced staff members. That is, new teachers are somehow suspect because they are dedicated to "new methods," and experienced teachers are not to be relied upon because they are "traditional." It is felt that these attitudes pervade the staff and therefore split it into two camps. The evidence is to the contrary. The data from one study reveal that almost nine in ten beginning teachers found their fellow teachers to be friendly. One in ten found their colleagues to be indifferent and fewer than one in a hundred characterized their colleagues as unfriendly. Most of the teachers who reported indifferent or unfriendly attitudes on the part of fellow staff members were in secondary schools.<sup>14</sup> It would appear that the problem is insignificant, particularly for beginning elementary school teachers.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The importance of getting new teachers launched on a successful career is an inescapable responsibility of supervision. Thus new staff members must be given help in addition to whatever supervisory or in-service program is underway. The orientation of the new staff must contribute to a successful beginning, but it is crucial that there be continuous supervisory help offered throughout the year. Here it is important that those charged with supervision be aware of the problems commonly experienced by new staff members together with their subtle, multiple antecedents. If this is done and appropriate help is offered by supervisors, principals, and fellow teachers, an enormous contribution will have been made to the teacher, the school, and the profession.

<sup>14</sup> National Education Association, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

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<sup>14</sup> National Education Association, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

## CHAPTER 10

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# The Elementary School Principal as an Instructional Leader

Of all those who have responsibility for improvement of instruction, the elementary school principal holds a unique position. Ordinarily, he is assigned to a single school or, at the most, two schools. Perhaps more than any other supervisory personnel he is involved in the ongoing day-to-day work of the school. He is knowledgeable about the teachers on the staff, the children in the school, the community of which the school is a part, the relationship of the school to others

improvement in them. It is also important that he know how best to utilize such auxiliary services as those provided by curriculum workers, librarians, audio-visual specialists, health and guidance personnel, and remedial specialists.<sup>1</sup>

In the view of Dean and McNally the central task of the elementary school principal is the supervision and improvement of instruction.

It would be beyond all reason to expect that the array of skills and knowledges offered above might be developed solely through preservice education. Yet it is not too much to ask that preservice programs of preparation for elementary school principals be oriented in the direction of instructional improvement. The concept of instructional leadership, if placed at the heart of preservice education, tends to unify the maze of detail of the principalship and reduce it to sensible and manageable proportions.

Many preparation programs for elementary school principals emphasize the importance of instruction. This concern for instructional skill is reflected in the certification standards developed by many states since 1946.<sup>2</sup> It is probably true that requirements imposed by institutions preparing elementary school principals have run ahead of certification standards since state requirements for the principal's certificate tend to be minimal.<sup>3</sup>

When one turns to examination of training programs for elementary school principals and to the opinions and judgments of those who are committed to the education of principals, he finds the clearest indication of concern with

<sup>1</sup> Stuart E. Dean and Harold J. McNally, "Learnings Particularly Important for Elementary School Principals," unpublished paper prepared for the Seventh U.C.E.A. Career Development Seminar, November, 1962, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> W. Earl Armstrong and T. M. Stinnett, *A Manual on Certification Requirements for School Personnel in the United States*, National Education Association, Washington D.C., 1957.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Elementary School Principals, *The Elementary School Principalship—A Research Study*, Thirty-seventh Yearbook, National Education Association, Washington, D.C., 1958, p. 167.

in the system, and the desires and aspirations of the school patrons. He is therefore in an excellent position to help teachers with instructional problems.

To be sure others who serve in supervisory roles may know a great deal about the total school structure, personal and professional relationships, and student personnel, but it is the elementary school principal who must deal with all of these variables in an interrelated fashion every day in the same setting. Because of his view of the totality of his building's enterprise, his work in supervision can be unusually effective.

## SUPERVISORY ELEMENTS OF THE PRINCIPALSHIP

By its nature the elementary school principalship is concerned with instructional leadership. This concern is evidenced by (1) educational programs for the principalship, (2) on-the-job analysis of the duties of the principal, and (3) reactions of principals themselves to their positions.

### *Educational Programs for the Principalship*

The complexity of the task of educating elementary school principals for effective instructional leadership is pointed up by Dean and McNally when they say:

It is true that other administrators should be familiar with the general purposes and nature of the elementary school program; but the elementary school principal needs to know that program as a physician knows anatomy: as an integral, pulsing system, and its complex detail. He should know its objectives; the content, the scope, organization and sequence of its learning program; and the rationales underlying these features. He should be acquainted with the strengths and weaknesses of various programs and methods, with the characteristics of good instructional methods and material, and with effective ways of bringing about

with supervision, but, in the opinion of the experts sampled, more time and effort are needed, particularly in the areas of teacher conferences, evaluation of the instructional program, and helping new teachers. While elementary school principals perceive these duties to be important, professors who train principals perceive them to be crucial to the principalship.<sup>4</sup>

Schmaus examined the opinions of laymen, college professors, teachers, and superintendents of schools with respect to training programs for elementary school principals.<sup>5</sup> While there were instances of disagreement with regard to some elements of the principalship, there was close agreement among the professionals with regard to supervision. This is illustrated most clearly by the following data:

TABLE 5 • IMPORTANCE OF PROSPECTIVE PRINCIPALS ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE EFFECTIVE TEACHING\*

Importance	Groups Surveyed			
	Professors	Laymen	Teachers	Superintendents
	95.4%	80.0%	94.1%	95.4%
Average Importance	4.6	16.0	5.9	4.6
No Importance	0	4.0	0	0

\* Schmaus, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

Professors and superintendents in Schmaus's sample show perfect agreement in their concern for effective instruction. An almost similar percentage of teachers in this study reflect the same concern. Only the laymen express some doubt about this facet of the principal's preparation, but almost all regard it as important, but perhaps less so than the professional educators.

<sup>4</sup> Roger M. Zimmerman, "A Survey of the Duties of Elementary School Principals in Minnesota," unpublished master's paper, University of Minnesota, 1959.

<sup>5</sup> Roger G. Schmaus, "A Survey Study Examining the Opinions Held by Laymen, College Professors, Teachers, and Superintendents as to What an Elementary School Principal's Preparatory Program Should Be," unpublished master's paper, University of Minnesota, 1959.

instruction. Although institutional training patterns vary, the program at the University of Minnesota serves as a good illustration. To be admitted to the program leading to the principalship, the candidate must bring to the program a major in elementary education. Thus before he begins the program, the candidate presents roughly fifty-five quarter hours of elementary education credits from the fields of methods, educational psychology, curriculum, history and philosophy of education, and student teaching. In addition to this background, candidates are urged to bring to the program experience as a classroom teacher. After these admission requirements are satisfied, together with a favorable prognosis of success in graduate study, the student then submits a program of study that must include at least three fields. The most common pattern includes representation from the fields of curriculum and instruction, educational administration, and educational psychology, in that order. Many variations of this pattern are available to students with special interests, backgrounds, and competence. In the main, however, the emphasis is placed upon broadening the candidate's already considerable background by advanced work in curriculum, instruction, and supervision. The point of view underlying the Minnesota plan is that principals should have an overriding commitment to the improvement of instruction.

Patterns of other institutions may vary in content and credit hours, but rarely in intent.

### *On-the-Job Analysis of the Duties of the Principal*

When one turns to investigations which involve those who train and those who hire elementary school principals, an emphasis upon instruction is again found. Zimmerman studied the duties of elementary school principals in Minnesota and compared these job analyses with the expert judgment of well-recognized leaders in elementary school administration and supervision. Zimmerman found a heartening concern



those who work in this important field and by those who are actively engaged in this work.

### *Reactions of Principals to Their Positions*

There is additional evidence to support the view that principals themselves clearly perceive their supervisory roles. The 1958 study of the elementary school principalship of the National Department of Elementary School Principals furnishes some of this evidence. Supervising principals indicated that approximately one-third of their time was spent on supervision and curriculum. However, they would prefer to spend about half their time on instructional and curricular improvement. Teaching principals would prefer to treble the meager time at their disposal for supervision and curriculum.<sup>†</sup>

Despite the desire of elementary school principals to devote more time to supervision, it appears that this desire has not been sufficient to accomplish its goal. Comparative data point up the melancholy fact that no gains have been made at all in recent decades in freeing additional supervisory time.

TABLE 7 • PER CENT OF TIME THAT SUPERVISING PRINCIPALS DEVOTED TO MAJOR FUNCTIONS\*

Function	1928	1948	1958
Administration	30%	29%	30%
Supervision	31	39	35
Clerical Work	18	15	14
Teaching	4	2	3
Other Functions	14	15	18

\* Department of Elementary School Principals, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

Undoubtedly reasons can be advanced for this singular lack of progress. Increased enrollments, increased administrative work, and the general increased complexity of the educational

<sup>†</sup> Department of Elementary School Principals, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

In another study, Duncer and Skov compared the attitudes of school superintendents and professors of education with respect to the selection and preparation of elementary school principals.<sup>6</sup> When asked to rank the important elements of the elementary school principalship, professors and superintendents groups responded in the following manner:

TABLE 6 • RANK ORDER OF PRINCIPAL'S DUTIES AS PERCEIVED BY PROFESSORS OF EDUCATION AND SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS\*

Duty	Rank Assigned by Professors of Education	Rank Assigned by School Superintendents
Supervision	1	1
Curriculum	2	2
Administration	3	3
School Interpretation	4	4
Working with Parent Groups	5	5
Working with Non-Certified Personnel	6	6

\* Duncer and Skov, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

Ninety-three per cent of the professors and 92 per cent of the superintendents indicated that the major emphasis in training programs for the principalship should be placed on supervision and curriculum development.

It appears to be clear that, on the basis of certification standards, colleges and university training programs, and expert judgment of professors, superintendents, teachers, and principals themselves, supervision and curriculum development are most highly regarded as important elements of the principalship. Since the business of the school is instruction, with all that this implies, it is gratifying to witness a deep interest in its improvement by those who educate and employ

<sup>6</sup> Virgil Duncer and Kenneth Skov, "A Questionnaire Study Comparing the Attitudes of School Superintendents with those of Professors of Education in the Selection and Preparation of Elementary School Principals," unpublished master's paper, University of Minnesota, 1959.

When one combines those activities that bear on instructional improvement, such as curriculum work, testing, teacher evaluation, gifted children, and, perhaps, grading systems, he can see that over 75 per cent of the areas of interest cited are supervisory in the broad sense of the term.

While there appears to be a general concern with curriculum and instruction on the part of elementary principals, Zimmerman<sup>8</sup> found differences among groups of principals with respect to how they perceive their functions. Principals in metropolitan areas regard supervision and improvement programs more highly than do principals from suburban areas. Principals from rural and small communities feel supervision to be less important than do suburban principals. One might conjecture about reasons for such differences, but it is certainly clear that the principals in the metropolitan areas used in this study had more time, more secretarial help, and more supervisory aids than did the principals from the other two areas. There seems to be a relationship between the amount of education and concern with the supervisory elements of the principalship. The metropolitan principals attached more importance to supervision than did the other two groups. Of the metropolitan group, 80 per cent held the master's degree. Fifty-eight per cent of the suburban group held the master's degree, and only 26 per cent of the out-state group had attained the master's degree.

Zimmerman's study, while giving evidence of a generally satisfactory nature, points up that not all elementary school principals are committed to vigorous programs of instructional improvement. Reasons for this lack of commitment to supervision may lie within the individual principal, within the job setting, or it may stem from lack of training. Dean and McNally put it this way: "The central task of the elementary school principal is the supervision and improvement of instruction. In addition to the principal's intimate knowledge of the program of the elementary school, therefore, he needs

<sup>8</sup> Zimmerman, *loc. cit.*

enterprise have all exerted strong counter pressures in opposition to increased supervisory time. None of these reasons is as compelling, however, as those that might be advanced for greater effort in the direction of providing substantially more time for instructional improvement on the part of elementary school principals.

Evidence of another nature provides some insights into the perceptions held by elementary school principals with respect to their work. This evidence stems chiefly from the work of the principals' professional organizations. One need only consult the programs of the national meetings of the Department of Elementary School Principals and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development to recognize a keen awareness of the importance of instructional improvement. In addition to national meetings, state and local professional organizations address themselves to curriculum and instruction with gratifying frequency. Table VIII illustrates this point nicely.

TABLE 8 • SUBJECTS OF MAJOR INTEREST TO  
LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ASSOCIATIONS\*

Subject	Frequency of Mention	
	Number	Per Cent
Salaries and Salary Scheduling	72	28
Curriculum	57	23
Improvement of Instruction	36	14
Principal's Status	31	12
Teacher Rating or Evaluation	28	11
Pupil Marks and Marking	27	11
Gifted Child	25	10
Administrative and Supervisory Policies and Practices	24	9
Principal's Handbook	21	8
Testing Programs	20	8
Secretarial and Other Help for Principal	17	7
Discipline Problems	14	6

\* Department of Elementary School Principals, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

are able to provide a wealth of supervisory services must be particularly concerned about the problem of coordination of effort. In large school districts the problem is usually met on each of two levels: the district level and the building level. There is usually a provision for central office personnel to coordinate the work of the various schools of the district with the help and cooperation of the elementary school principal. The work of intraschool coordination of instructional planning and execution is largely the principal's responsibility.

In school districts of insufficient size and/or wealth, the position of coordinator of instruction may be somewhere in the future. The entire task of coordination then falls upon the elementary school principals. Some effort may be expended at the district level through meetings and discussions, under some designated part-time leadership. The task of intraschool coordination remains, however, as a significant phase of the principal's work.

If the principal's role is, at least in part, to be a coordinator of supervisory services, at least four problems are raised:

1. The problem of cooperative supervision.
2. The problem of authority in decision-making.
3. The problem of conflict in roles.
4. The problem amalgamating supervisory services.

### *Cooperative Supervision*

Obviously when more than one person becomes responsible for the improvement of instruction, the issue of cooperation among the various supervisory personnel emerges. The degree of cooperation afforded to members of the supervisory personnel by the principal and by each other determines in large part the effectiveness of supervisory services. The elementary school principal, from his unique vantage point, is perhaps in the best position to facilitate cooperative effort among the various people charged with supervision. This is particularly true when dealing with supervision within the

to learn well the knowledges and techniques necessary to effective classroom supervision, and to the broader task of instructional improvement. This is one of the greatest weaknesses in the elementary school principalship today, largely because preparation programs have been desultory and ineffective in preparing for the facet of the principal's role."<sup>9</sup>

Otto attributes a lack of commitment to supervision to forces within the position itself as it exists in many areas: "—it was not until relatively recent years that the elementary school principalship has been recognized as a key position in the administration of the schools and has been assigned the major administrative and supervisory functions for which it is so strategically situated. The slowness with which this development of the elementary principalship has taken place is indicated by the fact that even today, in many communities, those acting as elementary principals spend more of their time in classroom teaching and administrative and clerical detail."<sup>10</sup>

Whatever the reasons for lack of attention to supervision on the part of elementary school principals, one must conclude that the majority realize the importance of instructional improvement as central to their jobs and most wish to free more time for supervision.<sup>11</sup>

## RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL TO OTHER SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL

When considering the relationship of the elementary school principal to other supervisory personnel, the aspect of coordination comes quickly to the fore. Those districts which

<sup>9</sup> Dean and McNally, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>10</sup> Henry J. Otto, *Organization and Administration of Elementary Schools*. New York: Appelton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1954, p. 654.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Elementary School Principals, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

teachers to accept since they see the importance of all the elements of the curriculum as they work together for the overall development of the child.

In addition, elementary school principals sometimes become concerned over a high degree of specialization on the part of a supervisor. The principal regards all elements of the curriculum as being important while individual supervisors who work in his school may not have so broad a view. When a situation of this kind occurs, it immediately becomes the task of the elementary school principal to guard against exploitation of members of his staff by overzealous supervisors who do not see beyond the bounds of their own subjects. An extreme example of preoccupation with a specialized concern was present in our elementary schools not too many decades ago when penmanship supervisors were urging inordinate amounts of time to develop handwriting skills. There is no doubt that other aspects of the curriculum probably received inadequate attention in schools that spent hours of instruction on developing, or trying to develop, copperplate handwriting. The possibility of the development of this type of situation is always present. Of course no one can take sides against maximum instructional effectiveness in any subject-matter area, but, when a supervisor with a special interest in a special skill demands an inordinate amount of time for its development, the problem of maintaining proper balance becomes sharply focused.

The principal can do a great deal to maintain a balance of supervisory activity. While it is probably true that some supervisors expect preferential treatment with regard to time and effort, it is probably more often true that supervisors are not aware that they are in effect demanding preferential treatment. The principal can expedite the entire supervisory program by pointing out to special supervisors instances of imbalance. By bringing these imbalances into a better relationship, the entire supervisory program will be advanced. One way of assuring a better balance would be to have the

they feel it is militaristic if not militant. The term makes implicit the concept of authority by those who hold line positions and removes authority from those who hold staff positions. At least this was thought to be the concept. It is doubtful that teachers ever kept such a fine distinction in mind.

To identify line personnel as superintendents, assistant superintendents, secondary, junior high school, and elementary school principals is to give persons in these positions authority that was not held by personnel who were designated as staff. In the category of staff are commonly counted supervisory personnel, coordinators of instruction, and the like. While such a distinction might have been borne in mind by those who draw schemata for line and staff, it is probably true that teachers do not make so fine a distinction. This is particularly true in situations where supervisors arrogate to themselves authority which was never intended for them. Here the very term supervisor implies authority. However, if one takes the point of view that supervision is designed to help the teacher help the children, then supervisors ought to be service-oriented without regard to the extent of their authority. It is for this reason that one might urge that the distinction between staff positions, on the one hand, and positions which connote authority, on the other hand, be emphasized. One might say parenthetically that the effectiveness of the helping teacher plan for supervision probably is due in large part to the fact that the helping teachers are not considered to be figures of authority.

Because the principal's role is one of supervision (staff) and one of administration (line), his position is doubly difficult. He considers himself as an instructional leader and therefore one who guides rather than drives. He expends his efforts in drawing from a staff of teachers their best efforts. He realizes that this cannot be done by edict or by command but rather by displaying characteristics of leadership. On the other hand, the principal is responsible for what happens in



elementary school principal set up meetings with those supervisors who ordinarily work in his school so that they can be apprised of the entire picture. One can assume good will on the part of supervisors and therefore one can also assume that they will not make extraordinary demands on the time of the teacher or the children to develop their fields to the exclusion of others. It can be said without much fear of contradiction that if the principal does not exert some leadership in this direction, no one else will. If a careful balance is not maintained, the alternative might well be anarchy and exploitation, however well intended.

### *The Problem of Authority and Decision-Making*

When one discusses the problem of coordinating programs of instructional improvement, one immediately encounters the problem of authority. Certainly decisions must be made within the context of any supervisory program and the question becomes one of responsibility for such decision-making. Of course the process of decision-making is not as simple a situation as assigning responsibility to someone to make decisions. Actually there are decisions made on two levels. One of these is on the policy level and here it is hoped that fundamental decisions which will affect purposes and directions of programs would be made cooperatively by all those who have an interest in the program. Therefore, decisions with regard to policy will be made not only by supervisory personnel, but by teachers and administrators as well. It would be naïve to assume however that, once policy has been set, all decisions will have been made. Decisions must be made almost daily in order to implement the policy that has been cooperatively established. It is within the context of these decisions that problems arise. These problems usually involve overlapping authority either real or imagined.

In the past a good deal of attention has been paid to the concept of line and staff. Many people object to the term since

inadequate orientation to the task to be pursued, misunderstanding of the task itself, or misunderstanding or ignorance about the role to be assumed by individuals who are involved in dealing with the task. The obvious remedies for these problems lie in a clear delineation of goals so that everyone understands them as clearly as possible.

In addition to the establishment of clearly stated goals it is important that the nature of the task is understood at the outset. This is not always possible, but certainly the elementary school principal is in a position to correct misconceptions which emerge as the task is pursued. This ongoing clarification of goals is an important part of resolving conflicts in role. Not only is it important to establish goals and the nature of the task as clearly as possible, but it is also important that supervisors understand their roles clearly, as well as their relationships to others. Here again the elementary school principal is in a unique position to perceive these relationships and to be aware of imbalances as the program develops.

When a conflict in role stems from inadequate understanding of the goals and the ensuing task which is based on these goals, one is correct in assuming good will at the outset on the parts of those who are involved in the task. Operating from this premise, problems in role conflict are easily dealt with. However, if these conflicts are not perceived for long periods of time, good will is likely to dissipate, only to be supplanted by strong personal feelings by those who feel their roles infringed upon. Thus to separate personality problems from disagreement about goals may be an oversimplification.

Another conflict in roles of enormous importance is that which may arise between teachers and supervisory personnel. It is lamentably true that some teachers are never made fully aware of the altruistic nature of supervision. Because of previous experience of an unfortunate nature with regard to supervision, some teachers may categorize supervisors as impediments rather than facilitators. The elementary school principal is in a unique position to determine these kinds of

changes. Within the context of a supervisory program it is crucial that everyone who is concerned with the program clearly understands the role he is to play. Where such understanding is lacking, confusion about responsibility is likely to result.

Most conflicts in role among supervisory personnel probably stem from two main sources: (1) personality clashes and (2) disagreement about goals.

### *Conflict Due to Personality Clashes*

Among the most difficult personnel problems to solve are those which have their roots in personality clashes. It must be said at the outset that sometimes these difficulties are impossible to resolve. It is true that personal relationships can get off to a bad start and degenerate into situations that can only be described as intolerable. Often an elementary school principal is a helpless bystander and his most earnest pleas may fall on deaf ears. The problem of coordinating supervisory services in the fetid miasma of professional jealousies and hatred can be a traumatic experience for the most skilled in human relationships. Of course one does what he can. However if nothing can be done, the obvious recourse is a shift in responsibilities for those who are unwilling or unable to resolve their differences. This shift in responsibilities should not be regarded as retribution but rather recognition of a fact that a bad situation exists and must be changed. Of course the change should be made as skillfully and as painlessly as possible.

### *Conflicts in Role That Stem from Disagreement about Goals*

Conflicts in role that stem from a disagreement about goals are easier to resolve than those which stem from personality clashes. A disagreement about goals may stem from

## PROBLEMS OF SUPERVISING PRINCIPALS

In the foregoing sections it was pointed out that the principal's major responsibility for effecting instructional improvement is through coordinating supervisory services so that they will exert maximum effect on school programs. This is not an easy task. Among the problems that beset supervising principals are the following: (1) Administration versus supervision, (2) staff perception of authority, (3) leadership and instruction versus maintenance of instruction.

### *Administration Versus Supervision*

When elementary school principals begin to talk about themselves in relation to their work, it is not uncommon to hear a wish expressed in this fashion: "I wish I could spend more time in supervision but administration takes most of my time." It is strange that these two tasks should be dichotomized since they are not really mutually exclusive. Often the line between administrative practice and supervisory practice is thin, indeed. It might be said that no supervisory program of any merit can be developed in the absence of sound administrative procedures. The formulation of a supervisory program is in fact an administrative task involving the help of teachers, supervisors, administrators, and interested, competent members of the public. What many elementary school principals do not realize is that administrative tasks which are designed to upgrade instruction are indeed supervisory tasks as well.

If one takes a broad view of administration and supervision, one sees no conflict between them. However, it would be fatuous to imply that all administrative procedures really find their fulfillment in the improvement of instruction. There are tasks that must be performed by elementary school principals in parts of the nation which are really not adminis-

attitudes and to work positively for their eradication. Of course the major responsibility for eliminating negative perceptions rests with the supervisors themselves who, in their contacts with teachers, can portray themselves as supportive, helpful people. Although one may talk at great length about what supervisors should be, it must be recognized that in the minds of many teachers supervisors are regarded as deterrents and obstacles that must be circumvented. Such attitudes on the parts of teachers are, of course, unfortunate but they do exist, and the elementary school principal should realize when they are present and attempt to work toward improving a bad relationship that might exist between teacher and supervisor.

### *The Problem of Amalgamating Supervisory Services*

In order for supervisory services to exert their maximum impact upon programs of instructional improvement, someone must be designated as an instructional leader to see that these services are utilized in ways that are balanced and directed. The view here expressed is that the elementary school principal is uniquely suited for this task. Because of his position, which carries with it responsibility and authority for the ongoing program of his building, the principal is most strategically located to bring into focus the elements of supervision so that maximum cooperation is developed among those who are charged with supervisory duties. In addition, the principal, because of the authority vested in him by virtue of his responsibility for the building, is the logical person to make those day-to-day decisions that implement the policy decisions which are arrived at cooperatively by those concerned in improvement programs. Again, because of the principal's unique position it is he who must assume major responsibility in clarifying roles and tasks so that the supervisory program may move ahead with the least amount of friction. All of these tasks are involved in amalgamating supervisory services to the end and that improvement of instruction can be carried forward smoothly and effortlessly.

Therefore anyone who finds himself working at administrative tasks which are irrelevant to the instructional phases of the school program is probably dealing with administrative tasks that do not need to be done at all. If these tasks are self-initiated by the principal, he had better look to himself. If, on the other hand, they are initiated from the superintendent of the board of education, he and his colleagues had better work with these other echelons to impart greater understanding of the task of the elementary school.

Of course there can be a problem of administrative detail which may sharply reduce the amount of time at one's disposal for improvement programs. Where this condition exists, an attitude of acceptance is perhaps the worst attitude that can be envisioned. Administration and supervision, at least at the elementary school level, are parts of the same whole and should be so regarded. At certain times of a school year administrative details will certainly entail the major part of a principal's time, notably at the beginning of the school year and at the close of the school year. But there are also rather long stretches of time which can be set aside for a major effort in the direction of supervisory activity. Viewed in this fashion there is nothing wrong with administrative detail as a part of the elementary school principalship, because what is done administratively will sharply influence what is done with regard to supervision. An aimless administrator will probably be an aimless supervisor.

### *Staff Perception of Authority*

Earlier it was pointed out that there can be conflicts in roles among those who are charged with effecting instructional improvement in various branches of the curriculum. There is one fundamental conflict of roles that sometimes works in a powerfully negative way to impede the work of the elementary school principal. That is the conflict or confusion of roles in which the principal is held in the minds of teachers.

trative, but for want of another category are commonly classified as administration. Thus the elementary school principal who spends a great deal of his time with paper work may indeed appreciate the difficulties imposed upon him by pseudo-administrative tasks as they detract from supervision. The problem is most acute in those situations where the elementary school principal is not given sufficient help of all kinds which enables him to carry out the supervisory aspect of his job which is central. For example, it is common to find in many districts the elementary school principal typing his own correspondence, counting money, supervising the lunchroom, ordering films, and performing a variety of tasks which indicate a total lack of perception with regard to the fundamental function of this position. Certainly no elementary school principal wishes conditions of this sort, but they are imposed upon him by communities which have not been made aware of the function of the elementary school principalship. Where shortsightedness is the root cause for a problem of this sort, the only answer lies in increasing the breadth and vision of those who occupy positions on boards of education.

However, the problem has another dimension and that has to do with elementary school principals who seek ways to avoid supervision and who use the press of administrative detail for an excuse. While such behavior may characterize only a minority of elementary school principals, even a small number is too large. Elementary school principals of this sort are somewhat analogous to the men on the board of education who always talked about the boiler in the school rather than the curriculum. They felt they could do something about the boiler. For an elementary school principal to conceive of administration as distinct from supervision is to miss the point of the elementary school principalship. Administration and supervision at the elementary school level are complementary, and the most competent elementary school principals are those who subordinate administrative detail to the fundamental task of the school, which is instruction.

by all the appropriate members of the school staff. However, it should be pointed out that it is the elementary school principal who with his staff is in a unique position to detect slippage in those areas not under direct study. As he works through the complexities of his job, he must alert himself to problems outside the supervisory program.

In this sense then it is not correct to consider the maintenance function as contrary to leadership. The elementary school principal who, by coordinating the efforts of others and by his own efforts, maintains a high level of instruction is one who exerts leadership in a very telling way.

The concept of leadership in maintaining excellent programs of instruction may be obvious to some, but it is underscored here because of the emphasis that is usually placed upon a change without due emphasis upon stabilizing those elements of the instructional program which are not under direct scrutiny.

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It was pointed out earlier that the elementary school principal has a dual role to play and in practice it is difficult to separate out the interrelated elements of these roles.

The significance of an elementary school principal to the staff stems from the perceptions about him which are held in the minds of the teachers. Put in its simplest terms the question becomes, is the elementary school principal in the minds of the teachers a boss or a helper? Actually he is both, but he is one or the other or both at the appropriate time. The problem assumes importance when the role of the authoritarian figure is generalized in the minds of the staff to the point that the principal's role as a helper is eclipsed.

### *Instructional Maintenance as an Aspect of Leadership*

Leadership implies those qualities which enable an individual or individuals carefully to assess and control the dynamics of a given situation. It implies a constant, deliberate, forward move. However, instructional improvement cannot be advanced on all fronts simultaneously. The effort required to advance instructional improvement in all curricular areas is so enormous that it would tax even the most elaborately staffed school systems. Therefore while the supervisory program moves ahead with regard to one or more segments of the curriculum, some attention must be given to those aspects of instruction which are not under direct study. This is the maintenance aspect of supervision and is often overlooked in the literature because of the more appealing and challenging work of finding new and better means of instruction.

Yet once a satisfactory program in a given curricular field is worked out, it must be maintained at a high level while improvement is sought in other curricular fields. Therefore the maintenance of quality instruction is in itself a responsibility of leadership.

The assumption of leadership with respect to maintaining a high-level program of instruction can and should be shared

PART 3

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The Evaluation  
of Supervision

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## The Evaluation of Teaching

It is difficult to separate teaching from learning. Consequently, a consideration of the evaluation of teaching apart from its important results is a bit artificial. Yet such a separation of teaching and learning will be made here to identify some problem areas.

### PROBLEMS OF TEACHER EVALUATION

The problems of teacher evaluation to be considered here are concerned with teacher rating, evaluation of teaching

*The evaluation of the total supervisory effort must include a determination of the quality of teaching and learning and the quality of supervision itself. These three aspects of evaluation are highly interrelated and, taken together, will give a rather comprehensive picture of the quality of instruction with respect to strengths and weaknesses. Growing out of the evaluation will be the provision for needed changes to cope with the problems revealed by the evaluative procedures.*

*Problems of evaluation are sometimes difficult to deal with because there is a variety of terminology used, and some of this terminology is inaccurate. For example, there are those who speak of carrying on evaluation, but what they really do is rate. Others talk about evaluation, but what they really do is measure or appraise. Measurement, appraisal, and rating are not evaluations. They furnish the data from which evaluations can be made. Unfortunately rating, measurement, and appraisal often become ends in themselves with result that evaluative procedures are necessarily incomplete.*

*Evaluation in the true sense of the word is at the very least a two-step process. The first of these steps involves the collection and collation of information and data about attributes which are relevant and important to teaching. The second step involves value judgments based squarely on the information gathered. Consequently, the quality of evaluation is heavily influenced by the appropriateness of the data collected and by the perceptions, experiences, and skill of those who read meaning into these data. Irrelevant information can yield only irrelevant evaluation. Appropriate information furnishes the raw material for good evaluation, but does not guarantee it.*

### *The Identification of Important Teaching Attributes*

Almost no one has difficulty in identifying very good teachers and very bad teachers. And almost no one needs a rating scale to make such distinctions. While important attributes of good teaching are commonly agreed upon, such agreement is not always reflected in rating scales. Knudsen and Stephens studied 57 rating scales and found 199 different traits with frequencies ranging from 1 to 43.<sup>2</sup> A more recent study by Scully points out that the rating scales she studied are in agreement on major traits, but there is considerable disagreement on subpoints that are designed to define these traits.<sup>3</sup> From studies such as these it might be concluded that there is some disagreement among raters with respect to what constitutes important teaching attributes.

The authors of many rating scales take the view that their scales possess a remarkable adaptability, since the same scale is used for all elementary school teachers, regardless of grade level, and sometimes the same scale is used for elementary and secondary school teachers. When this is done, one can be sure that important characteristics peculiar to certain levels of teaching are not presented, or presented so generally that their specific character does not emerge. Engleman points out the problem when he says: "If ranking (two fifth grade teachers) against each other seems difficult, how much more frustrating would it be to try to rank them over against two kindergarten teachers, two eighth grade teachers, two physical

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ties and Obstacles Inherent in Merit Rating for Teachers," *Journal of Teacher Education*, June, 1957, p. 138. Marcella Kelly, "Let's Have None of It; Case Against Merit Rating," *School Executive*, March, 1949, pp. 56-57. Lloyd Trump, "Merit Rating Puts the Cart before the Horse," *Nation's Schools*, June, 1950, pp. 51-53.

<sup>2</sup> C. W. Knudsen and Stella Stephens, "An Analysis of Fifty-seven Devices for Rating Teaching," *Peabody Journal of Education*, July, 1931, pp. 15-24.

<sup>3</sup> Eileen Scully, *An Evaluation of Selected Rating Scales in Major Cities of the United States*, unpublished master's paper, University of Minnesota, 1960.

competence, and the problem of total evaluation of teaching. These aspects of teacher evaluation may be regarded as points along a continuum from the narrowest (rating) to the most adaptable and diversified approach (total evaluation).

### *Teacher Rating*

Rating methods and scales are devised to gather information quickly about traits presumed to be important to job performance. Formal rating procedures appear to have the following purposes:

1. To determine the progress of probationary teachers.
2. To select personnel for promotion.
3. To furnish the basis for transfers.
4. To gather information relative to dismissal.
5. To award "merit" pay.
6. To improve instruction.

Whether formal rating methods achieve any of these purposes is speculative. Certainly the problems posed by the six purposes listed above demand the collection of evidence and data. The question is whether formal rating methods comprise the best means of gathering such information.

### *Underlying Assumptions*

If one were to set about devising a rating scale, he would have to assume that:

1. He can identify the important attributes of teaching to be described.
2. He can, in fact, describe these attributes, usually in a sentence or two.
3. He can determine levels of quality, acceptability, and/or suitability.
4. The scale can be used uniformly by different raters.

This is a large order indeed, and in the minds of many, these assumptions have never been fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hazel Davis, "Facts and Issues in Merit Salary Schedules," *Journal of Teacher Education*, June, 1957, p. 133. Finis E. Engleman, "Difficul-

"all" media? When does a teacher reach the point when he "understands" child development? To ask a rater to understand the meaning of these terms, much less to use them in a standard fashion, is to assume the wisdom of Solomon.

Some school systems have attempted to solve the semantic problem by offering definitions of the terms used. This can be a great help, to be sure, but these definitions sometimes create more problems than they solve. A school system in Utah presents the following "help" to its raters: "Drive—enthusiasm for teaching that rubs off on students and creates a desire for learning, is alert, is energetic. Self-assurance—confident, free from anxiety, sense of humor, sympathetic, optimistic, loyal, sincere, not easily agitated." These definitions are fine, maybe even laudable. However, there is still a question of meaning. How does a rater tell when "teaching rubs off on students"? Surely this is a term than can be termed only as imprecise. How does a rater, a layman in this sense, sort out the natural anxieties any teacher has from those that are more serious? Can anyone be really "free from anxiety"?

After examining literally hundreds of rating scales, it appears in our judgment that the more important the trait, the more it is likely to need qualification which space does not permit.

To be sure, raters are often given in-service work so that the difficulty of meaning is minimized. While such activities are to be encouraged, it is doubtful that the semantic problem of rating scales will be overcome. The problem lies not with the language but with the technique, which does not permit the fullness of language required for the purpose.

### *Levels of Quality, Acceptability, and/or Suitability Can Be Determined*

One of the purposes of rating scales is to discriminate satisfactory performance from performance that is unsatisfactory. At what point does performance reach an unsatisfactory



education teachers, two high school science teachers, two Latin teachers, and/or two commercial teachers? Unless extreme care is exercised, the raters will find themselves in the ancient dilemma of rating sheep with horses and chickens with ducks, simply because they are found in the same environment.<sup>4</sup> If writers of rating scales attempt to encompass the sweep of the educational enterprise on a single instrument, the problem of selecting the important traits to be rated becomes almost impossible.

### *Important Traits Can Be Described Briefly*

The choice of language used on rating scales is of supreme importance. Unless the rater knows the meaning of the language used, errors in judgment are certain to result. The reliability and validity of the scale is affected, and the whole enterprise becomes a kind of guessing game.

It is difficult to explain rated traits with the economy demanded by a scale. For example, a scale used by a school system in the state of Oregon lists, among others, the following items:

1. Motivates sufficiently.
2. Evaluates pupil growth broadly.
3. Uses all media.
4. Analyzes pupil needs.
5. Cultural background.
6. Genuine interest in youth organizations.
7. Sufficient professional training.
8. Understands child development.
9. Likes children.

This is not a bad example deliberately chosen. It was drawn from a scale widely used only a few years ago and perhaps still is. The problem is one of meaning. What, for example, is sufficient professional training? At what point is one motivating "sufficiently"? Do authors of the scale really mean the use of

<sup>4</sup> Engleman, *loc. cit.*

well-modulated voice to score higher, earn more money, and get faster promotions than an intelligent, creative, insightful teacher who is not possessed of many of the external attributes. The equating of important characteristics with trivia is not uncommon. When it occurs, some injustice is likely to ensue.

The problem of determining the level of quality, acceptability, and/or suitability is a formidable one and has not received the attention it deserves by those who campaign actively for formal rating.

### *The Scale Can Be Used Uniformly by Different Raters*

This assumption must hold true if those who are being rated are to receive equal treatment. It appears that the person most responsible for rating teachers is the building principal.<sup>6</sup> Thus one group of teachers is rated by someone who may be quite different from the rater of another staff.

This "differential" rating poses some interesting problems. One of these is the problem of reliability. Unless a rating scale in combination with its user yields consistent results, its value is questionable. There is some evidence that the reliability of rating scales is not high. In commenting on this evidence, Ryan points out that "The direct study of the repeated ratings of supervisors shows that they often have poor consistency, and the correlations between successive ratings by the same rater are moderate at best."<sup>7</sup>

Wrightstone mentions four types of errors which limit the reliability of rating scales. These are the error of lenience or severity; the error of central tendency; the halo effect; and the "logical" error.<sup>8</sup> The error of lenience or severity stems from personal bias. The error of central tendency characterizes

<sup>6</sup> Scully, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas A. Ryan, "Merit Rating Criticized," *Personnel Journal*, May, 1945, pp. 6-15.

<sup>8</sup> J. Wayne Wrightstone, "Observational Techniques," *Encyclopedia of Educational Research*, Chester A. Harris (Ed.), The Macmillan Company, New York, 1960, p. 931.

level? Or, to refine the problem even further, when does average performance become above average? The implications made by many raters is that there are some absolutes which can be identified. For example, many forms are scaled numerically, with 1 denoting "poor" performance and 5 denoting "superior" performance. The values assigned to each of the rated traits is averaged to yield a "composite" score. In this fashion a teacher with a score of, say, 86 is superior to one with a score of 80. Of course, this is nonsense. If the point value of the scale breaks at 85, the first teacher is "superior" while the second may be only "good." Typical rating scales simply cannot be this precise. What does "86" mean? What does "80" mean? Are these scores in fact comparable? To illustrate, let us suppose the following hypothetical scale on which are rated teacher A and teacher B:<sup>5</sup>

<i>Trait</i>	<i>Teacher A</i>	<i>Teacher B</i>
Voice	10	5
General Scholarship	5	10
Knowing and understanding the pupil	5	10
Appearance	10	5
Social Adjustment	10	8
Classroom Environment	10	8
Total Points	50	46

Who is the better teacher? According to the demands of the scale from which items are drawn, teacher A ranks ahead of teacher B and would therefore get preferential treatment. But is teacher A in fact better than teacher B? There is really no way of knowing. However, one might judge from the item scores that teacher B "rates" better than teacher A in matters crucial to good instruction and may in fact be the better man. But the whole matter is conjectural *except to the rater and the teachers rated*.

What is now the problem is one of weighting. In the rating scale mentioned above, there is no provision for loading more value into important items. Thus it may be possible for a pleasant, personable, well-dressed scatterbrain with a

<sup>5</sup> The traits given are taken from a scale used in a large city system.

bility that validity of rating scales suffers when the traits they seek to measure are so carelessly identified. If a scale is to be valid, it must measure what it says it measures with respect to the population to which it is applied. Consequently, the traits must be precisely identified and adequately defined. Most scales do not possess such precision. One can only assume that different raters are measuring different things even when they use the same scale.

The question of validity is interesting from another standpoint. The problem of selecting outside criteria to establish validity for a rating scale has not as yet been solved. Consequently, any validity that rating scales have is face validity. That is, the validity is built in from logical considerations. However, to construct validity into rating scales is a risky business and can probably be accomplished only when the traits to be measured are objectified as clearly as possible. There appears to be vast room for improvement on this score.

To assume, then, that different raters will use an identical scale in a similar fashion is starry-eyed optimism. Unless rating scales yield consistent (reliable) results and unless they measure what they purport to measure (validly), we have no assurance that such scales are measuring with precision. What undoubtedly happens in practice is that raters check their ratings against what they already know about a teacher. Thus a rating is usually in the mind of a rater before he rates. He might just as well fill out the forms at his desk and use his observation time for more significant purposes.

### *Other Problems Related to Formal Rating*

Thus far, the difficulty of composing and using rating scales has been discussed. There are, however, other problems that arise from the use of formal ratings. These problems include (1) morale factors, (2) time factors, and (3) relationship to the improvement of instruction.

those raters who hesitate to rate at the extremes of a scale and consequently have a disproportionate number of teachers who appear to be average. The halo effect results from a general mental attitude or mind set with regard to certain people. The strength of this mind set exerts a strong influence on the ratings given to certain people. The "logical" error is a manifestation of presuppositions which the rater holds. For example, if the rater's training and experience have taught him that a textbook method of instruction in social studies is the "right" method, a teacher using a unit method may be rated down.

It is not difficult to see how these four types of errors will affect the consistency of results of rating, particularly if the rater in one building is subject to one type and other raters fall victim to the other types. Two teachers of identical abilities would appear to be quite different if rated by two different judges.

A number of studies indicate that reliability of ratings can be enhanced by pooling the number of judgments made by different raters. Depending on the trait to be rated, the number of independent judges needed to insure respectable reliability ranges from three to twenty-two.<sup>9</sup> Many schools would find it difficult to arrange for the minimum number suggested, and it is beyond reason to expect any school to furnish twenty-two independent judges for each teacher. The problem of reliability of teacher rating scales has not been solved. Indeed, it is rare to see a rating scale for which reliability is reported. Most writers of such scales simply do not bother with the concept at all. Yet it is fair to say a scale without reliability furnishes very poor evidence upon which important decisions are made.

The problem of validity is also a matter of some concern. Do raters actually measure what the scale indicates? Reference has been made earlier to the tricky problem of language and semantics as it relates to rating. There is a strong possi-

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 931.

bility that validity of rating scales suffers when the traits they seek to measure are so carelessly identified. If a scale is to be valid, it must measure what it says it measures with respect to the population to which it is applied. Consequently, the traits must be precisely identified and adequately defined. Most scales do not possess such precision. One can only assume that different raters are measuring different things even when they use the same scale.

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## *Rating and Morale*

It seems that most teachers are opposed to rating, particularly for salary purposes. The opposition of the Department of Classroom Teachers of the NEA is on record. The American Federation of Teachers is equally opposed to merit rating. Of course, opposition to rating is not sufficient reason to preclude its use. Many innovations in almost every field are opposed because of special interest, lack of precedent, or a general reluctance to "rock a stable boat." If teachers' opposition to merit rating were based on such regressive reasons, one would find it difficult to find much sympathy.

However, the reasons for opposing formal rating appear to run deeper than an affection for the status quo. One team of writers phrases it this way:

It is true that many of the means employed in evaluation have proved to be unsatisfactory. The reasons are not difficult to find. Some of the means have been borrowed from civil service and business administration and have not been adapted to the evaluation of teaching. These means of evaluation—usually some kind of rating scale—have been arbitrarily adopted in some cases by boards of education and imposed upon unwilling subjects who have had no voice in the preparation of the instruments and in the methods of their use. As a result an antipathy toward the evaluation of merit has been developed on the part of many teachers. Furthermore the type of rating frequently employed has been so unscientifically done and so unwisely used by some school officials that the teachers in these school systems have come to regard rating as a policy to be opposed or an evil to be endured. The mental attitude of teachers toward the evaluation of merit under such conditions is naturally hostile.<sup>10</sup>

Formal ratings affect morale because they often inject an element of competition into a school setting. It can be argued with some justice that a staff of teachers who compete among

<sup>10</sup> Paul B. Jacobsen, William C. Reavis, and James D. Logsdon, *The Effective School Principal*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1954, p. 390.

themselves for salary, promotion, or favor will probably not have morale of a high order. Morale is dependent in part upon identification with the goals of the enterprise. When personal goals overshadow group goals, the stage is set for the entrance of prima donnas, all anxious for the accolades of the dancing master.

### *Time Problems and Rating*

Time taken for rating must be taken from other, perhaps more significant, activities. If reliable ratings can be made only by a group of competent judges over a period of time, the nature of the problem begins to emerge. It would be too much to say that time devoted to rating is a complete waste of time, but it is legitimate to ask if this is the best use of time. If a rater is to rate some of the impossible items on the typical rating scale, he will need to spend more time on rating than he can on offering the type of help that would lead to a good rating.

### *Rating and the Improvement of Instruction*

Many proponents of formal rating stress the relationships between rating and good instruction. That is, ratings will be instructive to teachers because they will reveal weaknesses and serve as incentives to do better. If instructional improvement is being accomplished in districts with formal rating, it is probably not due to the rating. The weaknesses of rating scales in terms of reliability and validity are so glaring that one cannot place much confidence in their results.

In addition, rating scales usually are not specific enough to furnish the concrete guidelines necessary to deal with instructional problems. For example, if a teacher experiences difficulty with, say, arithmetic instruction, a typical rating scale will do little to give direction to improvement.

In this vein, the judgmental aspect of rating assumes



significance. Will teachers actively and honestly reveal their problems to a rater? Some probably will, but others will not. Even if only a few teachers are reluctant to discuss their instructional problems with supervisors who are their raters, it is still too many.

The problems posed by the judgmental aspect of formal rating ripple beyond the rater and the teachers he rates. The concept of formal rating may indeed poison the clear atmosphere in which teachers and non-rating supervisors must function. Teachers may feel that ancillary supervisory personnel represent an echelon which holds some secret power. To be frank and open about instructional problems with these supervisors, in the minds of some teachers, is to attract the attention of a rater. The whole scheme, therefore, has less than an exhilarating effect upon all phases of instruction.

## TOTAL EVALUATION OF TEACHING

It is probably clear at this point that we lack a certain enthusiasm for formal rating. However, this should not be taken to mean that teaching should not be evaluated. It should be evaluated constantly and comprehensively, and these evaluations should have as their purposes the improvement of teaching and learning. Such evaluations imply a great deal more than the unreliable, invalid generalizations that most formal scales possess.

The evaluation of teaching ought to possess certain characteristics that will aid in the important business of instructional improvement. These evaluations should be:

1. Comprehensive.
2. Specific.
3. Variable.
4. Based on evidence.
5. Planned and discussed with teachers.

*Comprehensive evaluations* imply a look at the totality of teacher behavior as it influences instruction. Among these behaviors, personality factors loom large. When an evaluator says that a teacher is "sensitive to the needs of his pupils," or that he is "pleasing in voice and manner," he is really talking about aspects of personality. There is evidence which indicates that personality factors are more closely linked with teaching success than possession of techniques.

The assessment of personality is not an easy matter. Even the most sophisticated scales constructed for this very purpose are essentially short cuts to the more laborious work of observing overt behavior. Direct observation will reveal how teachers react to pressures, how they deal with frustrations, how they deal with people, and how they handle hostility. Since one cannot predict the various pressures that impinge upon teachers, he can only observe and evaluate reactions to these pressures as they develop. If such observations are frequent enough, evaluations can be made with accuracy. Of course, it would be difficult to quantify differences among teachers on this basis, but comparing one teacher with another is not really necessary if the aim is instructional improvement.

Of course, if evaluation is truly comprehensive, it will not be limited to personality considerations. Attention will be given to such matters as efficiency, capacity for work, excellence of planning, skill in the use of materials, knowledge, and the ability to use knowledge to influence behavior.

The interrelatedness of these matters mentioned above is of paramount significance. Because each influences the others, the constellation of a personality, attitudes, and knowledge together with teaching skill must be evaluated, not in discrete entities, but as parts of a large canvas, each of which contributes to a balanced and pleasing aspect. One is tempted to remark that formal rating scales fail utterly to present such a picture. It is probably true that good supervisors evalu-

ate in the manner suggested above anyway, and rating with scales becomes a pointless exercise.

*Specificity of evaluation* means that evaluations will be made within the context of clearly identified purposes. Is the instructional program in arithmetic drifting? Let it be examined, then, with respect to improvement, and further, let this examination be germane to the problem. Those influences which affect the program should be considered, with a view to changing those which do not contribute to the program in a positive fashion.

*Variability of evaluation* is inevitable if evaluative procedures transcend limited purposes. While the object of the evaluation, such as the spelling program, may remain fairly constant, it will be evaluated best if the evaluative procedures are diversified. Because problems of spelling instruction may vary from classroom to classroom, the means of appraisal and the meanings of these appraisals may vary also.

The problem of variability assumes even more importance when different curricular areas are considered. How one evaluates social studies instruction should be different from evaluations made of, say, arithmetic. Since the goals of instruction differ, the evaluative techniques should also differ.

*Evaluations based on evidence* are obviously better than those which are not. Evidence is used here in its broadest sense. Evaluations ought to be based on what is evident. This use of the term includes teacher behavior, activities which are a part of the teaching act, manifestations of important teaching traits, as well as the material afforded by more objective sources, such as test scores, inventories, and the tangible results of teaching.

*Evaluations should be planned and discussed with teachers.* Evaluative procedures should lead to improved practice. Evaluations which are used only to describe the status are useful, but not as useful as evaluations which point up next steps. Because teachers will need to carry out these next steps, it is not unwise for them to know the basis for their future

action. This is a good reason, but another reason of greater importance lies in the fact that cooperative evaluation is likely to result in better evaluation. It embodies self-evaluation on the part of the teacher, which is enhanced by an "outside" look. The values that a teacher perceives in a given activity may not be seen by a supervisor. Since the converse is true, it would appear that a broader base of insight and knowledge will be brought to bear.

## CAUTIONS TO OBSERVE WITH RESPECT TO EVALUATION OF TEACHING

Because evaluation probes into the values that teachers hold with regard to teaching, the procedures and results of evaluative techniques are not usually regarded lightly. For this reason, some precautions seem to be indicated which, if observed, may save both the teacher and supervisor a great deal of unhappiness.

*Beware of secondhand information.* Certainly supervisors are made privy to a great deal of interesting information about teachers and classroom procedures through sources that can scarcely be termed authoritative. Some of this information may be quite accurate, but much of it is wide of the mark. For example, parents who are credulous enough to believe all that they are told by their children sometimes stir up some confusions. The child's recollection of a negative classroom incident often makes up in sincerity for what is lost in accuracy. It is common for parents to lodge complaints without hesitation. The supervisor who accepts such testimony in the spirit with which it is offered will soon have a problem. The rule to follow in such circumstances is to maintain a pleasant air of detachment until firsthand evidence is at hand.

*Evaluate with respect to teaching and not the teacher.*

Some might say that it is not possible to remove the teacher from an evaluation of teaching. Those who hold this view are quite correct. The precaution is still in order, however, because it will tend to keep the attention of the evaluator away from the teacher per se and on the learning situation. Of course, the teacher as part of the setting will be evaluated, but not to the exclusion of other important classroom activities. If teaching, and presumably learning, is evaluated, the teacher will be evaluated with respect to appropriate matters as his behavior influences the learning. This precaution is probably most useful to those who consider teacher rating and teacher evaluation as synonymous terms.

### *Evaluations Are Confidential*

Perhaps this precaution is gratuitous. Yet there are instances when the results of evaluation are known to more than the teacher and the evaluator. Most often the teacher is responsible for telling others. There are times, however, when the evaluator tells others about his evaluations. Of course, most supervisors do not prattle about a teacher to other teachers. However, he may discuss evaluations with other supervisors, the principal, and central office personnel. This can and often does become the source of a considerable leak which may come back to the teacher, sometimes in a surprisingly altered form.

There are times when evaluations will need to be discussed with other supervisory personnel. However, the purpose should be constructive: to confirm impressions, to discuss tentative plans, or to seek additional supervisory help. What is to be avoided is the informal, "funny thing happened to me in Mr. Kirk's classroom" sort of thing. Conversations of this sort serve no useful purpose, and are the type that are passed along to no one's benefit.

There is one kind of evaluation that can be discussed in every possible setting imaginable. That is the evaluation

which is strongly positive. Passing comments with enthusiasm has as its result an uplifting of the teacher's satisfaction with his work. The rule to be followed with no exception is to discuss no evaluation with anyone but the teacher unless further help is sought to aid the teacher or unless the comments are favorable.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

It is perhaps evident at this point that evaluation of teaching is vital if instructional improvement is to occur. It is precisely for this reason that evaluation through formal rating is not highly regarded here. In our judgment, it is not sufficient, and it has a way of defeating its own purpose. What is favored here is a diversified approach that can come only through frequent and supportive contacts with teachers; contacts which actively encourage teachers to seek supervisory help and which work toward a solution of instructional problems. When such evaluations are made part of the process of supervision and not judgmental documents, evaluations will be more comprehensive, more positive, and more directional than other narrower approaches.

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## CHAPTER 12

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# The Evaluation of Learning

The evaluation of learning is an indispensable step in the supervisory process. If the objective of supervision is the improvement of instruction, the appraisal and evaluation of learning is not a matter of option.

Efforts to evaluate learning fall into two general categories. The first of these is represented by formal approaches, such as standardized achievement tests, teacher-made achievement tests, diagnostic tests, both standard and teacher-made, personality tests, and sociometric techniques. The second category of evaluative procedures is informal. Included within



this classification are teacher observation, supervisor observation, and the informal evaluation of conditions which have an influence on learning.

## FORMAL EVALUATIVE PROCEDURES

### *Testing Program*

One of the important aspects of formal evaluation of learning is the testing program. At least two problems arise with respect to this phase of evaluation:

1. What are the characteristics of a basic testing program?
2. What characterizes a good test?

### *Characteristics of a Basic Testing Program*

A basic testing program includes those tests which represent an absolute minimum amount, below which adequate information is not attainable.

The following types of tests and their distribution are commonly used:

- Late kindergarten or early first grade—reading readiness.
- Grade 1, spring—reading achievement test—group intelligence test.
- Grade 2, fall and spring—reading achievement test.
- Grade 3, midyear—achievement test battery—group intelligence test.
- Grade 4, midyear—achievement test battery.
- Grade 5, midyear—achievement test battery—group intelligence test.
- Grade 6, midyear—achievement test battery.

There are a few things about this suggested basic testing program that bear mention. One is the number of intelligence tests given to each child. Three seems to be a reasonable number to administer in the elementary grades, especially since

most schools must rely on group tests. Group intelligence tests present some problems of reliability, particularly at early grade levels, and problems of validity at all grade levels. In order to gain the best estimate of a child's mental capacity, the mean of three scores is better than a single score and should yield a satisfactory indication of intelligence for most pupils. Because intelligence changes slowly, if at all (unless some unusual circumstances occur), it is not necessary to test for mental capacity every year.

Some testing programs test for intelligence at grades two, four, and six, rather than at grades one, three, and five. The assumption underlying this practice seems to be that a reading readiness test in the first grade makes an assessment of intelligence unnecessary at this level. However, the relationship between intelligence tests and reading readiness tests is moderate rather than high, and, if heavy reliance is placed upon readiness tests to indicate intelligence, errors of classification are likely to result. Even so, the practice of testing for intelligence at even numbered grade levels is strongly preferred over "programs" which rely on a single group test for estimates of I.Q.'s.

Another feature of the suggested basic testing program mentioned above deserves mention. It is recommended that only reading achievement tests be given in grades one and two. This suggestion is at variance with wide practice, but, in our judgment, it has merit, particularly for a basic testing program. One reason is related to the crucial importance of reading at these levels. Achievement in the phase of instruction must be measured as accurately and as comprehensively as possible. An achievement test designed specifically for this purpose is preferable to primary grade reading tests found in many achievement test batteries which ordinarily test only a few skills.

Another reason for delaying the use of a battery of tests until the third grade stems from the nature of primary grade test batteries. They are typically normed to measure children

in the first three grades. This means that items must be included to take care of bright third graders. Thus most first and second graders are asked to respond to items well beyond their understanding. The effect of this is not likely to be favorable. Any test of inordinate difficulty has a depressing effect on those tested. To be sure, teachers usually tell the children that they are not expected to know the answers to all the questions. However, the usefulness of this encouragement has a way of dissipating when the youngest children can answer only a few of the questions. The teacher may know that the norms "will take care of them," but the children do not.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD TEST

Because there are so many achievement tests it is inevitable that some will be better than others. Consequently, when a choice must be made among a number of tests, it is well to know in general those features which characterize a good test. A good test is (1) reliable, (2) valid, (3) in line with purposes of instruction, (4) characterized by well-written items, (5) easily administered, (6) easily scored, and (7) amenable to clear interpretation.

### *Reliability and Validity*

Without reliability and validity, the results of a test are meaningless. Any accurate interpretation of a test assumes that the test gives consistent results and that it measures consistently what it claims to measure. It is difficult for school staffs to run the statistics necessary to arrive at reliability and validity coefficients, and fortunately it is unnecessary for them to do so. The test publishers have checked these matters very carefully, with the result that tests from reputable publishers offer a minimum of problems in this respect.

However, for validity, it would be well for a staff to consider local variations in curricular offerings. For example, a standardized arithmetic test will not be valid for classes who have been taught under the newer mathematics programs. Another illustration points up the need for care. If a physical science test is administered to a class which studied natural science, the problem of validity is a real one. These differences between curriculum offerings and test content can be controlled, of course, and, in most instances, they probably are. However, since validity is peculiar to a specific situation, it would be well to look to the matter of the relationship between test content and what is taught.

### *A Good Test Is in Line with Instructional Purposes*

This characteristic, alluded to in the previous section, implies that objectives of instruction are clearly stated and apprehended by the school staff. These objectives determine the nature of the measuring instrument. For example, if one of the purposes of arithmetic instruction is to enable children to understand the social uses of arithmetic, a test which measures computational ability misses an important instructional objective. If a school system is committed to a "functional" spelling program in which words are selected from the child's written work, a standardized spelling test may not deal with what the children have learned. The invalidity thus introduced makes it difficult to attach any meaning to the results of such tests.

### *A Good Test Is Characterized by Well-written Items*

The importance of this characteristic is fairly obvious. Items couched in language that is unclear obscure the intent of the question. If the item is ambiguous, it is likely to be unreliable.

A well-written item is contemporary, or at least within

the child's field of experience. Some well-known tests are badly in need of revision and contain items which may be unfamiliar to today's urban or suburban children. In addition to clarity of language, well-written items are concise and pointed. Good items are direct and devoid of verbiage. A high coefficient of reliability for a given test is a good indication that it does, indeed, possess well-written items, but if a choice must be made between two tests with good reliability, the choice should be in the direction of the test with the clearer and more precise language.

### *The Items of a Good Test Discriminate*

A good test has items that discriminate those who know from those who do not. If test items do not have discriminating power, they reveal very little. Thus, any item which all children pass does not discriminate and may be regarded as worthless, at least for purposes of ranking. The same may be said of an item so difficult that no child passes it.

Ideally, the ideal item is one which half the class misses. This yields the greatest number of discriminations. However, such precision is rarely found, and an item is thought to have good discriminating power if 20 to 70 per cent of a group passes it successfully.

### *A Good Test is Easily Administered*

A great deal of frustration can be avoided if ease of administration is a criterion for the selection of a test. The best test situations are those which are handled expeditiously. Directions which are brief, clear, and leave no room for doubt create an efficient testing situation. These must be clearly spelled out by the manual and must not be subject to individual interpretation. An objective test is not the proper setting for originality, either on the part of the teacher who gives the directions or pupils who receive them.

However, ease of administration must be balanced against other considerations. It should not be regarded as the most important criterion of a good test. In no case should a staff sacrifice reliability, validity, and clearcut items for the sake of ease of administration. Only when all else is equal should this characteristic be given weight.

### *A Good Test Is Easily Scored*

Ease of scoring a standardized test is important for at least two reasons. One reason is related to time. While this may be a matter of convenience, it is nonetheless important. Scoring tests for hours on end comes under the heading of drudgery, and teachers should be spared this if at all possible. With the increasing use of machine-scored tests, this problem is diminishing in importance, but, when mechanical aids are not available, the task of hand-scoring complicated tests is wearisome.

Another important reason for a high regard for ease of scoring stems from concern with accuracy. If a test presents difficulties in scoring, inaccuracies tend to result. Obviously tests which can be scored quickly and efficiently are less subject to error. If other things are equal (and, regrettably, they rarely are) the test which is scored more easily is to be preferred.

### *A Good Test Is Amendable to Clear Interpretation*

Test scores by themselves are useless unless meanings can be attached to them. Standardized tests yield scores in a number of ways: grade equivalents, percentile ranks, and age scores are most common. It must be emphasized that these scores interpret only what has been tested. Consequently, the areas of the test's coverage must be clearly understood. To say that a child has a reading score of 5.4 does not mean much unless one knows what test was taken. In addition, some

therefore, a decision often forced by the availability of trained personnel; where such personnel is lacking, group tests must serve. To be sure, an individual child can be given a test designed for groups, and the information gained is quite useful. However, it is generally agreed that individual tests of personality, diagnosis, and social maturity administered by specialists are more precise and therefore more useful than group tests.

### *A Word of Caution*

Just as testing programs can be too meager, so too can they be too elaborate. While it might be said that it is impossible to amass too much information about a child, it is possible to amass information that is never used. When this happens, the testing program is overly ambitious. A great deal of time and money can be saved if clear decisions are made about what types of information are needed to help children in school. The testing program ought to be formulated in terms of these demands. From time to time it may be necessary to gain information about individual children. This is a legitimate demand which ought to be satisfied by individual testing. This is far more satisfactory than testing an entire class to gain information about only a few. The best rule to follow is to decide what tests are needed to gain the information that is necessary and then to test in the most appropriate manner.

### *Selected Standardized Tests*

Among the best and most widely used standardized tests are those described below. The reader who wishes more detailed information about these and other standardized tests can do no better than to consult *The Fourth Mental Measurements Yearbook*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Oscar K. Buros (Ed), *The Fourth Mental Measurements Yearbook*, Gryphon Press, Highland Park, New Jersey, 1953.

## STANDARDIZED BATTERIES—ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

*California Achievement Test* (California Test Bureau)  
1957 edition, grades 1-2, 3-4.5, 4-6, 7-9, 9-14.

Eleven scores—reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, reading total, arithmetic reasoning, arithmetic fundamentals, arithmetic total, mechanics of English, spelling, language total, handwriting.

*Co-ordinated Scales of Attainment* (Educational Test Bureau)

1946-50, Batteries for every grade, 1-8.

Eleven scores in punctuation, usage, capitalization, reading, history, geography, science, literature, computation, problem reasoning, spelling.

*Iowa Tests of Basic Skills—New Edition* (Science Research Associates and Houghton Mifflin)

1955-56, grades 3-9.

Fifteen scores in reading, language skills, work-study skills, and arithmetic.

*Metropolitan Achievement Test* (World Book)

1931-50, grades 1, 2, 3-4, 5-7.5, 7-9.5.

Ten scores for intermediate grades including reading, vocabulary, arithmetic fundamentals, arithmetic problems, English, literature, geography, history, science, spelling.

*Modern School Achievement Test* (Teachers College, Columbia University)

1931-49, grades 2-8.

Six scores.

*Stanford Achievement Test* (World Book)

1953 revision, grades 1.9-3.5, 3-4, 5-6, 7-9.

Tests in paragraph meaning, word meaning, spelling, arithmetic, reasoning, arithmetic computation, language, social studies, science, study skills.



## READING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

*Gates Reading Survey* (Teachers College, Columbia University)

1939-58, grades 3-10, three forms.

Tests in vocabulary, power of comprehension, speed, accuracy, and total.

*Gates Primary Reading Tests* (Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University)

1926-58, grades 1-2.5, three forms.

Three scores in word recognition, sentence reading, and paragraph reading.

*Iowa Every Pupil Silent Reading Test* (Houghton Mifflin)  
1910-47.

Three scores in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and total.

*SRA Achievement Series: Reading* (Science Research Associates)

1954-57, grades 2-4, 4-6, 6-9, two forms.

Two scores in comprehension and vocabulary.

Plus the following reading batteries of previously listed achievement tests:

*California Achievement Test*—reading vocabulary, reading comprehension, total.

*Co-ordinated Scales of Attainment*—one reading score.

*Metropolitan Achievement Test*—reading, vocabulary.

*Modern School Achievement Test*.

*Stanford Achievement Test*—paragraph meaning, word meaning.

## ARITHMETIC ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

Following tests previously listed under Standardized Batteries—Achievement Tests:

*California Achievement Tests*

Problems and processes, grades 3-9.

*Co-ordinated Scales of Attainment*

Computational skills and problem-solving, grades 3-8.

*Iowa Every Pupil Tests of Basic Skills*

Information, problems, and computational skills, grades 3-9. Also revised edition, *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills* (1955-56). Same areas and grades.

*Stanford Achievement Test*

Problems and processes, grades 3-12.

## SPELLING ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

Spelling tests are included in the batteries of the *California Achievement Test*, the *Co-ordinated Scales of Attainment Test*, the *Iowa Every Pupil Test of Basic Skills*, the *Iowa Tests of Basic Skills*, the *Metropolitan Achievement Test*, and the *Stanford Achievement Test*.

The above batteries provide only for a level of ability in spelling age or years.

## HANDWRITING TESTS

*Ayres Handwriting Scale, Gettysburg Edition* (Cooperative Test Division, Educational Testing Service)  
1912-40, one form.

Series of eight specimens in order of their legibility. Specimens are of upper grades.

*Evaluation Scales for Guiding Growth in Handwriting*  
(Frank Freeman, Zaner-Bloser Company)  
1958, forms for grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8-9.

## DIAGNOSTIC TESTS—READING

*Durell Analysis of Reading Difficulty* (World Book)  
1937-55, grades 1-6, one form.

A series of individual tests in oral and silent reading, word perception, systematic observations, word analysis, and phonetic pronunciation.

*Gates Reading Diagnostic Tests* (Teachers College, Columbia University)  
1926-53, grades 1-8, two forms.

A systematic and most complete approach to reading diagnosis. It includes oral reading, vocabulary, reversal test, phase perception, word perception and analysis, spelling, visual perception techniques, and auditory techniques.

*Monroe Diagnostic Reading Tests* (Stoelting Company)  
A series of individual tests that include Gray's Oral Reading Examination, Monroe's Iota Word Test, and Monroe's Word Discrimination Test. It gives an index of reading retardation and a classification of oral errors.

*The Silent Reading Diagnostic Test* by Bond, Clymer, Hoyt, (Lyons and Carnahan) 1955  
Can be used either as a group or an individual test. Measures characteristics in silent rather than oral reading which are arranged in a profile chart.

## DIAGNOSTIC TESTS FOR HANDWRITING

*Freeman Chart for Diagnosing Faults in Handwriting*  
(Houghton Mifflin)

*Nystrom Self-Corrective Handwriting Charts* (Minneapolis Public Schools)

## DIAGNOSTIC TESTS FOR SPELLING

*Gates-Russell Spelling Diagnostic Tests* (Teachers College, Columbia University)

1937, grades 2-6, one form.

Includes oral spelling, word pronunciation, giving letters for sounds, spelling two syllables (oral), word reversals, spelling attack, auditory discrimination, and visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and combined study methods.

## ARITHMETIC DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

*Brueckner Diagnostic Tests in Whole Numbers, Fractions, and Decimals* (Educational Test Bureau, Minneapolis, Minnesota)

*Diagnostic Chart for Fundamental Processes in Arithmetic* (Buswell and John)

1925, grades 2-8, one form.

Used for the four processes of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

*Diagnostic Tests and Self-Helps in Arithmetic* (L. J. Brueckner, California Test Bureau)

1955, grades 3-12, one form.

Includes four screening tests and twenty-three diagnostic tests in number facts, whole number operations, fraction operations, decimal fractions, per cent, and measures.

## PERSONALITY TESTS

*California Test of Personality* (California Test Bureau)

1953, revised, grades kgn.-3, 4-8, 7-10, 9-16, adult, two forms.

Fifteen scores in many areas.

*Detroit Adjustment Inventory* (Public School Publishing Company)

1942-54, ages 5-8, grades 3-6, 7-12.

"Telling What I Do" sections as child answers long questionnaire.

*The Personal and Social Development Program* (Science Research Associates)

1956, grades kgn.-9, one form.

Individual form for recording "critical incidents" in eight areas: personal adjustment, responsibility and effort, creativity and initiative, integrity, social adjustment, sensitivity to others, group orientation, adaptability to rules and conventions. Demands a great deal of recording on the part of the teacher.

*SRA Junior Inventory* (Science Research Associates)

1951-57, grades 4-8, two forms, one an extension of the first.

Uses a problem checklist that includes five scores in school, home, myself, people, health.

## MULTIAPTITUDE BATTERIES

*Jastak Test of Potential Ability and Behavior Stability* (Educational Test Bureau)

1958, grades 7-9, one form.

Ten scores in coding, picture reasoning, arithmetic, vocabulary, space series, social concepts, verbal reasoning, number series, space completion, and spelling. Six derived scores in language, reality, motivation, psychomotor, intelligence, and capacity.

*SRA Primary Mental Abilities* (Science Research Associates) L. L. Thurstone and Thelma Thurstone

1946-58, grades kgn.-2, 3-6, 7-12.

Each level has five or six scores (verbal, space, reasoning, perception, number).

## INTELLIGENCE TESTS—GROUP

*Kuhlmann-Anderson Intelligence Tests, Sixth Edition* (Personnel Press, Inc.)

1927-52, nine levels at grades kgn., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7-8, 9-12.  
One form. An older test but still recommended.

*Kuhlmann-Finch Tests* (American Guidance Service, Inc.)  
1951-57, eight levels at grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7-9, 10-12.  
One form.

*Lorge-Thorndike Intelligence Tests* (Houghton Mifflin Company)  
1954-57, five levels at grades kgn.-1, 2-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10-12.  
Two forms.

*Otis Quick-Scoring Mental Ability Tests, New Edition*, 1936-54. (World Book Company)  
Three levels at grades 1.5-4 (Alpha, one form), 4-9 (Beta, two forms), 9-16 (Gamma, two forms).

*Pintner General Ability Tests: Verbal Series* (World Book Company)  
1923-46. Four levels at grades kgn.-2, 2-4, 4-9, 9-12. Two forms for all levels except the first.

*SRA Tests of Educational Ability* (Science Research Associates) L. L. Thurstone and Thelma G. Thurstone.  
1957-58, three levels at grades 4-6, 6-9, 9-12.

## INTELLIGENCE TESTS—INDIVIDUAL

*Revised Stanford Binet* (Houghton Mifflin Company)  
1937 has two forms. Revised 1960 has one form. Ages 2 and over. 1960 edition uses standard score.

*Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children* (Psychological Corporation)  
1949, ages 5-15, one form.  
Gives fifteen scores.

## *Teacher-Made Tests*

While standardized tests are enormously helpful in providing sound bases for instructional decisions, they are not enough. To point out that evaluation is a continuous process is to point out an axiom. Therefore standardized tests which are usually given at periods separated by months must be supplemented by other means of evaluation. Important among these other approaches is the teacher-made test.

The teacher-constructed test is a most useful evaluative technique for a number of reasons. It is versatile; it can be tailored to precise elements of instruction; it can be designed to show mastery of skills; its results are easily understood by children; its frequency can portray step-by-step progress; and it has some diagnostic value.

### *Versatility*

Teacher-constructed tests can be designed to cover every phase of the curriculum. Because standardized tests are most useful for testing skill development, teacher-made tests can fill some rather important gaps, notably in the content areas.

Not only are they versatile as to coverage they can afford, but tests composed by teachers can offer a variety of item types which enhance the interest of the test. A variety of test types may have an additional value, although this value is not well documented. It may lie in the fact that some children feel that they do better with some item types than with others. Whether this is true or not is open to conjecture, but the fact remains that children do have attitudes toward tests, and teachers can avoid the negative results of such attitudes by altering item types.

### *Precision*

Teacher-made tests can focus down on small but important aspects of instruction. For example, a first grade teacher

can learn a great deal from a short but comprehensive test on initial consonant blends. The test can be written quickly and interpreted almost by inspection.

Another factor which makes for precision is related to the ease of construction. A number of different tests can be administered to different children at the same time, each test assessing a particular skill.

The factor of precision is extremely important from the standpoint of furnishing quick, pointed evaluations which can be quickly intergrated into future instructional plans.

### *Mastery of Skills*

If children attain perfect scores on a standardized test, there is something wrong with the test. Because standard tests are designed to discriminate, one seldom attains a perfect score. However, there are situations in which mastery is important, such as the addition facts, spelling words, and certain elements of language usage. Teachers need to know whether or not children have a complete command of these and other skills. There are other means of assessing the degree of mastery for given skills, but the teacher-made test is among the most efficient of these means.

### *Results Are Easily Understood by the Children*

Teacher-made tests are graded in a number of different ways, but whatever from the grade takes, is it usually based on the number of items missed. There is no problem of percentile scores, grade-level scores, and age scores which may obscure the meaning of the child's accomplishment. In a teacher-made test, the raw score is the only consideration. It can be compared directly to the scores of other children in the class and thus the "norm" group is the classroom group.

### *Step-by-step Progress Can Be Shown*

By definition a developmental program moves to successive levels of complexity and sophistication. To be sure that



a program is, in fact, developing, appraisals of progress ought to be made frequently. Teacher-constructed tests are eminently helpful to portray this progress. As the teacher is assured of satisfactory progress, the program can be moved ahead.

The portrayal of steady progress is important for another reason. Knowledge of instructional progress is important for teacher planning, but is equally important for the maintenance of pupil interest. Solid accomplishment is good motivation in itself, but even where such accomplishment is lacking, the very lack can be turned to good use by an alert and sensitive teacher.

### *Diagnostic Value*

One might hesitate to say that teacher-made tests furnish the information for a complete diagnosis of instructional problems. However, such tests can aid powerfully in this respect. This diagnostic value is two sorts. One is concerned with the problems of individual children. Types of errors can be noted and individual remediation can be offered.

The other type of diagnostic value is concerned with the teacher's interest in the effect of his teaching on the class group. Teacher-made tests make it possible to recognize problems peculiar to all or most members of his class. When tests reveal a problem shared by many children, such revelation will undoubtedly cause a teacher to revise his estimate of the teaching that led to the problem.

Thus teacher-made tests have a diagnostic value with respect to the children's learning and with respect to the teacher's teaching.

### *Relationship of Teacher-Made Tests to Standardized Tests*

While there are wide differences between standardized tests and tests constructed by teachers, they are both com-

ponents of a comprehensive evaluative procedure. There is sometimes a regrettable attitude that teacher-made tests are intimately bound up with the ongoing instructional program but standardized tests are "extra." This attitude comes dangerously close to the mistaken notion that "testing is not teaching" where standard tests are concerned.

Wherever this attitude toward standardized testing is evident, it should be stamped out vigorously. When one considers the uses which can be made of the results of standard tests, it should be clear that these uses ought to be enormously helpful in the improvement of instruction.

Viewed in this fashion, teacher-made tests and standardized tests are complementary. Each type serves in its own way to furnish the data necessary to move ahead with instructional improvement.

## TEACHER OBSERVATION AS AN EVALUATION OF LEARNING

Formal approaches to evaluation such as tests make it possible to gather information to which meanings must be attached. When this is done well, a partial evaluation has been made. It is a partial evaluation because other sources of information must be assessed. These other sources, which stem from teacher observation, are informal in nature and usually rather subjective.

When one recognizes the inevitability of teacher observation, he at once recognizes its importance. Teachers cannot refrain from making judgments about children any more than children can refrain from making judgments about their teachers. Such teacher judgments are a necessary consequence of the nature of teaching. The problem then is not whether judgments will be made but rather what kinds of judgments.

Another related problem is that of the judgmental ability of teachers.

It may be said with some logic that the judgments teachers make about children furnish the basis for observational evaluation. Thus the quality of judgments influences the quality of evaluation. Because judgments based on teacher observation are largely behavioral, the whole matter is a bit tricky. There is some evidence to indicate that even when judgments are based on teacher observation of the more clear-cut matters of intelligence and achievement, they can be somewhat wide of the mark. Alexander found that teachers in his sample were correct in selecting the most and least intelligent children about 58 per cent of the time. The lack of ability of these teachers to identify the highest and lowest achievers was even more startling.<sup>2</sup>

Apparently there are important trait differences between those who can judge people and those who cannot. Taft's<sup>3</sup> helpful survey of the literature in this respect indicates that there are two characteristics of especially poor judges; poor social adjustment and either good or poor (but not average) ability to make self-judgment. Taft indicates that good judges of people seem to be those who have among other things appropriate judgmental norms and motivation, with motivation being the most important. "If the judge is motivated to make accurate judgments about his subject and if he feels himself free to be objective, then he has a good chance of achieving his aim. . . ."<sup>4</sup>

There is reason to believe that the ability of teachers to make sound judgments can be improved. If teachers can be motivated to make conscious rather than casual judgments

<sup>2</sup> A. M. Alexander, "Teacher Judgment of Pupil Intelligence and Achievement Is Not Enough," *Elementary School Journal*, March, 1953, pp. 396-401.

<sup>3</sup> Ronald Taft, "The Ability to Judge People," *Psychological Bulletin*, January, 1955, pp. 1-23.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

and if judgmental norms can be provided, this implication is clear.

Teacher observation as an important method of evaluation fulfills a need that is met in no other way. For this reason, observational skills must be brought to a high order. There is little evidence which indicates that teachers or supervisors deal directly with this skill. Since it is a skill amenable to instruction, one can only hope that it become the focus of more direct attention.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Programs of instructional improvement are not likely to develop along desirable lines unless there is a sound program of evaluation which indicates pupil progress in all phases of the curriculum. The quality of the evaluation of learning is dependent on the quality and extent of the information to which meaning is attached.

This information is best gathered by means of standardized tests of achievement and intelligence, diagnostic tests, tests of social acceptance and social maturity; teacher-made tests of various types; and teacher observation. All these data must then be amalgamated into a comprehensive picture which, in its entirety, will present a revealing picture of the quality of instruction.

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## CHAPTER 13

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# The Evaluation of Supervision

The concept of evaluating supervision is widely accepted as an important aspect of instructional improvement. Such acceptance is merely recognition of the fact that the quality of supervision must be assessed if its impact on instruction is to continue along positive lines.

All of the characteristics of good evaluative procedures mentioned in the previous chapter should apply, of course, but when attention is given to supervision, three emphases must be made:

1. *Evaluation of supervision must be concerned with procedures as well as outcomes.* Evaluative techniques that are concerned only with results of supervision may give the evaluator only partial vision. Unless it is known which elements of supervision are responsible for desirable outcomes, some activities which lead to nothing may persist.
2. *Evaluation of supervision must be a part of the total process of instructional improvement.* It was pointed out in an earlier chapter that a supervisory program, in its simplest form, is characterized by purpose, activity, and evaluation. It follows that the evaluation of the supervisory program ought to include an evaluation of the quality of supervision through which the program is advanced. This emphasis adds an important dimension to the evaluation process, for direct attention is given to the question of how supervisory practice aided or hindered a given program. On the basis of the information yielded by such evaluation, direction is furnished for future supervisory work.
3. *Evaluation of supervision must be made in view of purposes.* While it may be commonplace to observe that purposes furnish the backdrop against which evaluations are made, this function of purpose is important enough to emphasize. Evaluation made apart from purpose simply is not evaluation.

## CONDITIONS NECESSARY FOR THE EVALUATION OF SUPERVISION

One sometimes gains the impression that the only prerequisite for evaluation of supervision is a good intention. However, certain basic conditions must be met if supervision is to be evaluated at all, and pious talk about the "worth of evaluation" is no substitute for a stern examination of these conditions.

Before evaluation of supervisory services can even begin, the following conditions must be met:

1. Accessibility of data.
2. An "evaluation" attitude.
3. Uninhibited communication between supervisors and teachers.

4. Freedom from threat.
5. Adequate time.

### *Accessibility of Data*

If supervision is to be evaluated with respect to purposes, data pertinent to the accomplishment of these purposes must be at hand. This much is obvious. What is not so obvious, however, is that information relative to the quality of supervision must be systematically gathered. The systematic collection of data implies a design or plan that recognizes the sources of information and how such information will be used. Thus, if an improvement program in any curricular area is planned, the means of evaluating the supervisory activities should also be planned. For example, if supervisory conferences are to be used in the improvement program, methods of assessing the impact of the conferences ought to be devised.

Further attention will be devoted to the matter of data collection when we discuss the problem of evaluating in terms of purpose in later sections of this chapter. Perhaps it is enough to state here that the matter of collecting appropriate data according to a plan is a consideration of first importance.

### *An "Evaluative" Attitude*

An evaluative attitude may be more easily described than developed. It is present when staff members, supervisors, and administrators have the happy habit of continually testing the effect of their activities. When this habit is extended to include supervisory activities as well as instruction, a condition is present which will facilitate evaluation of supervision. Obviously evaluations are not likely to be made aggressively or wholeheartedly where there is disinterest or indifference to the assessment of supervisory services.



### *Free Communication between Supervisors and Staff*

If evaluation is a cooperative matter, those who are expected to cooperate should be able to talk to each other without restraint. Since it is not possible to evaluate supervision without reference to the teaching staff, inhibitions on the part of teachers must be discouraged. Indeed, the active participation of teachers in the evaluation of supervision is so crucial to its success that no evaluation can be made properly without it. It is perfectly clear that situations in which teachers feel their ideas are not given a hearing, in which there are inordinate amount of supervisory status preservation, and in which supervisors are simply inaccessible, the vital communication link is missing. Reactions to supervision which are not made cannot be assessed. Thus in those situations cited above, supervisors may be living in a fool's paradise in which everything is pleasing to the eye, but in which carefully concealed discontent is communicated to all but the supervisors.

Open lines of communication are important for other reasons, of course, but the deleterious effect of their lack with respect to evaluation of supervision can scarcely be exaggerated. By inhibiting free expression, one of the most fruitful sources of supervisory improvement is sharply reduced.

### *Freedom from Threat*

An atmosphere of threat is a repressive atmosphere. While almost no one would acknowledge that he consciously threatens people, the threat may be implicit in his behavior.

This problem is not confined to supervisors. Indeed, it may be that supervisors are the least guilty of all. Some teachers are more threatened by other teachers than they are by those from whom they expect instructional help. Again, the threat is rarely overt. It may take the form of a subtle psychological warfare characterized by the nasty hint or the snide

remark given in such appropriate settings as the staff meeting. This condition may result from an overblown attitude of competition which causes some teachers to feel that they must be "better" than others. It may also stem from resentment when a teacher knows that another is more effective.

Whatever the reason, the threatened teacher and the teacher who threatens are often unreliable sources for accurate evaluation. The distortions that are likely to result from such a deplorable situation are impossible to gauge. Where such conditions exist, they should be changed. Unfortunately, this is more easily said than done, for some teachers make a career of contributing to the uneasiness of others. A teacher who is made insecure about his work is apt to defend himself by being less than frank about the supervisory services which might save him from a great deal of discomfort. If someone has passed the word that he is not a "good" teacher, why should he complicate his problem by criticizing his supervisor? In his mind it might just be the confirmation the supervisor needs with respect to his inability.

### *Time for the Evaluation of Supervision*

The time factor is one that must be dealt with carefully with regard to the evaluation of supervision. Participation in this activity is only one of many tasks which confront teachers and supervisors alike. However, the problem of time ought not discourage a staff from proper evaluation, but rather it should serve as an incentive to devising efficient means of evaluating its methods of improving instruction. If efficiency were to become an important consideration, two salutary effects might occur. Those who "have no time" for evaluation of supervision will probably find that such evaluation is not beyond their reach and those who waste a good deal of time through unnecessary probing would save time which might be put to better use.

3. Is the room designed so that interest centers may be set up and used?
4. Is the room comfortable from the standpoint of light, heat, ventilation, and cleanliness?
5. Is the classroom large enough to permit appropriate unit activities with ease?
6. Is there sufficient storage space to allow for an abundance of instructional equipment in the classroom?

A great deal more might be said about the ideal classroom from other standpoints, such as safety, color, and the like. However, since the focus of attention here is upon those factors which affect instruction, answers to the six questions above will probably give adequate information.

### *To Provide Methods and Materials to Insure Each Child's Progress*

There is no point in elaborating on the importance of this purpose. It is widely accepted in theory, if not in practice.

*Evaluation of the Effect of Method.* In order to gather evidence with regard to the effect of supervisory service on methods, evidence must be gathered with respect to:

1. The extent of grouping and individualization.
  2. The degree of pupil progress.
  3. The degree of pupil interest.
  4. The attitude of children toward school.
- 
1. The extent of grouping and individualization—
    - a. Is the class size of manageable proportions?
    - b. Are children grouped in terms of instructional needs?
    - c. Is there provision for differential assignments to take care of each end of the distribution?
    - d. Is there an ongoing analysis of instructional needs and strengths on which to base educational planning?
    - e. Is there an ongoing program of child study to furnish bases for grouping and individualization?

Perhaps the most useful source of information with regard to grouping and individualization is the teacher. If teachers

are asked to focus their attention on these matters in a systematic fashion, a great deal will be learned about this important matter.

2. The degree of pupil progress—
  - a. Is there a sequential testing program which reveals progress in terms of pupil ability?
  - b. Are there available supplementary tests to aid in diagnosis of instructional difficulty?
  - c. Is teacher observation as a means of assessment used judiciously?
  - d. Are there frequent pupil-teacher conferences related to problems of progress?
  - e. Is there an effort to amalgamate all sources of information about pupil progress into a comprehensive picture?
3. The degree of pupil interest—
  - a. How do teachers assess the motivational aspects of their teaching?
  - b. Are inventories administered to children to learn of latent interests?
  - c. What informal means are employed to learn of children's interest in school and school work?
  - d. What means are used to learn of children's interests from parents?
4. The attitude of children toward school—
  - a. How do teachers assess the effects of their behavior on children?
  - b. Are inventories administered to children to learn about the nature of the attitudes they possess?
  - c. What means are used to learn of children's attitudes from parents?

It should be noted that the effect of method on pupil progress must be evaluated both as to changes in pupil achievement and behavior. The two tend to go together and therefore must be viewed as an entity. This explains the concern with pupil interests and attitudes on pupil progress.

*Evaluation of Supervision and Materials of Instruction.* Because the quality of teaching is sharply influenced by the quality of instructional materials, it is difficult to view one

apart from the other. However, such a distinction is valid for the purpose of evaluation.

In order to evaluate the effect of supervisory services on instructional materials, evidence should be gathered about:

1. The extent and variety of instructional materials at each grade level.
  2. The quality of instructional materials at each grade level.
  3. The use of instructional materials at each grade level.
  4. The per-pupil cost of instructional materials.
- 
1. The extent and variety of instructional materials at each grade level—
    - a. Are teachers consulted with respect to acquisition of instructional materials?
    - b. Does text material in each classroom cover a range of grade level difficulty?
    - c. Is there a variety of text material provided rather than a single text for each subject at each level?
    - d. How extensive are supplementary materials such as audio-visual material, reference books, pamphlets, magazines, and manipulative materials?
    - e. Is there a complete record of instructional equipment which might indicate areas of need?
  2. The quality of instructional equipment at each grade level—
    - a. Are text materials recent and up to date?
    - b. Are text and supplementary materials authoritative?
    - c. Is there a planned program of textbook adoption which will insure the orderly retirement of text material?
    - d. Are there controls which insure quality of free and inexpensive materials?
    - e. Is the instructional material durable enough to withstand hard usage?
  3. The use of instructional equipment at each grade level—
    - a. Are there ways of determining whether quality instructional equipment is being neglected?
    - b. Is the use of instructional material adjusted to instructional problems?
    - c. Is there evidence that a variety of types of materials are used rather than a sole reliance on textbook instruction?
  4. Per pupil costs of instructional materials—
    - a. What is the amount allocated to instructional equipment?

- b. What is the average amount per pupil?
- c. Is there an imbalance in expenditures for instructional equipment; that is, are there some classrooms which receive a disproportionate amount of these funds?
- d. How does the expenditure for instructional material compare with other, perhaps less important, expenditures?

The questions with regard to instructional materials are designed to give answers upon which evaluations can be made. If information about the extent, the variety, the quality, the use of such materials is not gathered, together with cost figures, it is doubtful that any precise evaluation can be made.

*Evaluation of Supervision's Effect on Instructional Goals.*

The relevance of supervision to the establishment of clear and attainable goals is clear. However, the way to an evaluation of the effect of supervision on instructional goals is less clear. Because instructional goals tend to be peculiar to individual schools and school systems, their evaluation does not furnish an easy basis for generalization.

In view of the particular nature of instructional goals, perhaps all that can be said is that evidence with respect to the following items ought to be gathered by whatever means are appropriate for a given situation:

1. Evidence of the importance of instructional goals.
2. Evidence of the relevance of instructional goals.
3. Evidence of the variability of instructional goals.
4. Evidence of behavioral goals which have importance to instruction.
5. Evidence of ongoing work to refine and develop instructional goals.

*To Provide a Supervisory Program to Attain Instructional Goals*

The evidence needed to evaluate the effect of supervisory activity on this purpose falls into three categories:

1. Evidence of analysis of the program of instruction.

2. Evidence that work is being directed toward the improvement of a significant part of the school program.
  3. Evidence that the work being done is developmental.
1. Evidence of analysis of the program of instruction—
    - a. Are data collected and collated which will aid in instructional analysis?
    - b. Are teachers actively encouraged to analyze instruction through careful observation?
    - c. Are parents consulted to aid in analyzing individual problems?
    - d. Are special service personnel used to gather information which must be gained through specialized means?
    - e. Are the observations of special service personnel used to help analyze instructional problems?
  2. Evidence that work is being directed toward the improvement of a significant part of the school program—
    - a. Are attainable objectives for improvement formulated?
    - b. Are these objectives used as guidelines for activities which are designed to improve instruction?
    - c. Are data and information collected by which to appraise these activities?
    - d. Are meetings and conferences centered around problems raised by the improvement program?
  3. Evidence that the work done on instructional improvement is developmental—
    - a. Do the activities which are designed to improve instruction move on to successive levels of sophistication?
    - b. As staff members gain experience and knowledge about supervisory activities, are these experiences and knowledge used to greater effect?

### *To Develop the Attitude in the Staff that Supervision Must Be Cooperative*

Because it is essential for teachers and supervisors to have an abiding concern with the improvement of the school program, it becomes essential for them to augment any rugged individualism they may have with an attitude of cooperation. This attitude ought to be actively encouraged through the right sort of supervision. To assess the effect of supervisory

practice with respect to the active encouragement of cooperative work, evidence which bears on these factors should be gathered:

1. Evidence of morale.
2. Evidence of cooperative work.
3. Evidence of idea sharing.
4. Evidence of mutual support.

The information needed to assess each of these four factors is largely subjective and for the most part will be gathered through direct observation. For this reason it is difficult to suggest procedures to follow in gathering such information. Situations in which high morale is present, in which teachers are interested in each other's work, and in which teacher behavior is mutually supportive are visible without the need of instruments. Situations in which these characteristics are absent are equally apparent.

### *To Develop the Attitude That Instructional Improvement Is Directly Related to Self-Improvement*

Evidence of the effect of supervision on self-improvement can be gathered by considering the following factors:

1. Evidence of continued formal training.
  2. Evidence of attendance at conventions, workshops, and professional meetings.
  3. Evidence of professional reading.
  4. Evidence of self-appraisal.
- 
1. Evidence of continued formal training—
    - a. Do staff members enroll in systematic professional courses in order to keep up with their fields of instruction?
    - b. Are staff members apparently content with minimum levels of training?
    - c. Are staff members continuing formal training for reasons of self-improvement or for salary considerations?
  2. Evidence of attendance at conventions, workshops, and professional meetings—



- a. Do staff members avail themselves of such opportunities when they are available?
- b. Do staff members appear to use what they have gained from such meetings?
- c. Do staff members plan professional meetings through local associations on their own initiative?
3. Evidence of professional reading—
  - a. Do staff members utilize the professional library for self-improvement?
  - b. Do staff members give evidence of professional reading through their work?
  - c. Do staff members appear to be aware of recent events and developments in their field?
4. Evidence of self-appraisal—
  - a. Do staff members question their procedures?
  - b. Do staff members ask for help in analyzing their work?
  - c. Do staff members assess the reaction of children to their procedures?
  - d. Do staff members gather data and information about their teaching upon which judgments may be based?

### *To Provide Specific Help to Teachers with Day-to-day Problems*

To evaluate this purpose of supervision, the supervisor must be introspective with respect to his own work. As he looks to himself with respect to his day-to-day work with teachers, he ought to seek information about the following:

1. Evidence that he is trying to anticipate problems.
2. Evidence that he is actively seeking ways to help individual teachers with individual problems.
3. Evidence that his help is practical and utile.

In order to gather information about his effectiveness in all three of these areas, the supervisor ought to raise a series of questions which might include the following:

1. Do I put myself in a position to see the school program as it develops?
2. Do I see the staff members with sufficient frequency that I can become aware of problems?

practice with respect to the active encouragement of cooperative work, evidence which bears on these factors should be gathered:

1. Evidence of morale.
2. Evidence of cooperative work.
3. Evidence of idea sharing.
4. Evidence of mutual support.

The information needed to assess each of these four factors is largely subjective and for the most part will be gathered through direct observation. For this reason it is difficult to suggest procedures to follow in gathering such information. Situations in which high morale is present, in which teachers are interested in each other's work, and in which teacher behavior is mutually supportive are visible without the need of instruments. Situations in which these characteristics are absent are equally apparent.

### *To Develop the Attitude That Instructional Improvement Is Directly Related to Self-Improvement*

Evidence of the effect of supervision on self-improvement can be gathered by considering the following factors:

1. Evidence of continued formal training.
  2. Evidence of attendance at conventions, workshops, and professional meetings.
  3. Evidence of professional reading.
  4. Evidence of self-appraisal.
- 
1. Evidence of continued formal training—
    - a. Do staff members enroll in systematic professional courses in order to keep up with their fields of instruction?
    - b. Are staff members apparently content with minimum levels of training?
    - c. Are staff members continuing formal training for reasons of self-improvement or for salary considerations?
  2. Evidence of attendance at conventions, workshops, and professional meetings—

others, he does so in a way that is probably unique to him so that he uses outside evaluations in a way that can be described as self-evaluation.

A number of self-evaluation instruments have been devised to aid the supervisor in perceiving himself as clearly as possible.<sup>1</sup> The usefulness of such instruments depends heavily on the susceptibility of the supervisor to self-evaluation. It is not a question of one's being honest with one's self, although this is a factor not to be discounted. For the most part, however, errors in self-evaluation are likely to occur from rationalizations. ("How can I visit classrooms when all my time is spent in administration?") or from unreliable information ("The program must be all right because everyone seems to like it") or from simply asking the wrong questions ("Do all of you like our staff meetings?").

Whatever the reason for error, the supervisor who is intent upon examining himself should realize that he is dealing with a matter of inordinate difficulty. One of the most complex of human activities was summed up by the Greeks in two words: know thyself. The complexity of self-analysis should not discourage a supervisor from self-evaluation, but he should know that the process involves a great deal more than easy answers to obvious questions. Because the task of self-analysis is troublesome, we are somewhat averse to the notion of developing lists of questions or checklists that are assumed to result in self-evaluation.

How then should a supervisor evaluate himself and his work? One way that suggests itself is to ask others. When the problem of teacher rating was discussed earlier, it was pointed out that these ratings lacked reliability because seldom are sufficient judges available to rate the complex traits involved in teaching. It was also pointed out that the problem of time tended to prohibit frequent observations. However, with regard to teacher ratings of supervisors, these conditions are

<sup>1</sup> Among the widely cited of these self-evaluation instruments is that of Harold P. Adams and Frank G. Dickey, *Basic Principles of Supervision*, American Book Company, New York, 1955, pp. 259-260.

3. Do I know the children of the school as well as I can?
4. Do I keep informed about important matters of pupil progress?
5. Are my suggestions workable; that is, are they followed with some degree of success?
6. Do I keep a "log" of my supervisory activities to insure that no one is being overlooked?

### *To Develop a Security and Confidence in Staff Members*

Much of the evaluation of this purpose will have to be based upon the observations of the interaction of staff members with each other and with supervisors and administrators. Evidence for evaluating this supervisory purpose will stem from information relative to:

1. Behavior of the supervisor.
2. Behavior of other staff members.
3. The kinds of questions raised by staff members.
4. The kinds of help sought by staff members.
5. Willingness to try out suggestions.
6. Willingness to reject suggestions.

If there appears to be an easy free atmosphere among staff members and supervisors evidenced by confidence and security, frank questioning, and a willingness to accept or reject suggestions on the basis of professional considerations, the purpose has probably been met. If these conditions are not apparent, everyone has his work cut out for him.

## **SUPERVISORY SELF-EVALUATION AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF INSTRUCTION**

Self-evaluation as a means of affecting improvement is widely accepted. Indeed, one might say with a good deal of logic that unless one evaluates himself honestly and realistically, all other evaluations are meaningless. Unless one accepts the evaluations of others (outsiders), improvement is not likely to result. If one does accept the evaluations of

others, he does so in a way that is probably unique to him so that he uses outside evaluations in a way that can be described as self-evaluation.

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<sup>1</sup> Among the widely cited of these self-evaluation instruments is that of Harold P. Adams and Frank G. Dickey, *Basic Principles of Supervision*, American Book Company, New York, 1953, pp. 259-260.

reversed. The raters (teachers) are fairly numerous and they see the supervisor almost every day. The conditions, then, are right for reliable evaluations. Of course, the problem of isolating and describing the supervisory traits to be evaluated remains. Even so, if the traits are relevant to procedures involved with improvement of instruction, the impact of these traits will be felt by teachers as they go about their jobs. Teachers' judgments about the effectiveness of a supervisor is probably the most direct and revealing source of information which will enable a supervisor to interpret to himself his strengths and weaknesses.

Another basis for evaluation of supervision may take the form suggested by Corder.<sup>2</sup> This procedure assesses teachers' reactions to the value of the various elements of supervisory methodology. The procedure is as simple as it is revealing. The important techniques of supervision are identified and teachers are asked to respond to (1) strengths, (2) weaknesses, (3) suggestions for improvement, and (4) suggestions for additional types of help not in the program. A danger implicit in this method results from the amassing of irrelevant and petty complaints. But salient points will emerge and these will serve as yet another means of enabling the supervisor to evaluate what he is doing.

A third source of information which can enable a supervisor to sharpen his self-evaluation may be drawn from reactions of his school community. Parents have attitudes about the school their children attend. What are these attitudes, and how are they expressed? Questionnaires and checklists are often used to collect data about school matters as perceived by parents. These are useful, but not to be overlooked are the more indirect and more subtle ways of assessing the attitudes of school patrons. When parents discuss the strong features of the program, is there agreement about their posi-

<sup>2</sup> Geneva Corder, "An Evaluation of Supervisory Services for Newly Appointed Teachers," *Elementary School Journal*, May, 1954, pp. 509-516.

tive attitudes? When they complain, do their complaints center around the same one or two problems?

The information gained from parents may be highly colored at times, but if there are areas of strong agreement, the supervisor will do well to ponder them. This source of information will then be woven into the fabric of supervisory self-evaluation.

In this matter of self-evaluation, then, we recommend that the easy way be eschewed. Self-evaluation like all other evaluations must be based on solid evidence. Soul-searching may have its rewards, but it is not sufficient. Self-evaluation should point the way to better practice, and the way will be lighted, not by introverted introspection, but by the illumination furnished by knowledge gained from various sources in various ways. When this knowledge is evaluated by supervisors in terms of themselves and their jobs, self-evaluation is occurring.

## CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The evaluation of supervisory practice is not amenable to a simple approach. A great deal of attention must be devoted to the collection of evidence which in turn must serve as the basis for evaluating the effectiveness of supervision.

While checklists and other types of evaluative instruments may be helpful, they should not be permitted to obscure the complexity of the evaluative process. This is particularly true of supervisory attempts with self-evaluation.

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